HOW PHOEBE FOUND HERSELF

HELEN DAWES BROWN





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By helen Dawes Brown

HOW PHŒBE FOUND HERSELF. With frontispiece.

ORPHANS.

MR. TUCKERMAN'S NIECES. Illustrated.
A BOOK OF LITTLE BOYS. Illustrated.
THE PETRIE ESTATE. Also in paper binding.

TWO COLLEGE GIRLS.

LITTLE MISS PHŒBE GAY. Illustrated. HER SIXTEENTH YEAR. A Sequel to "Little Miss Phœbe Gay."

HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
Boston and New York

HOW PHŒBE FOUND HERSELF







PHŒBE

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BY
HELEN DAWES BROWN

WITH FRONTISPIECE



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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Ι

MEMINISSE JUVABIT

I HAVE a large crimson-covered book, with the words inscribed upon it in gold letters, "Hæc olim meminisse juvabit." This is the book affectionately known to college girls as "old Memorabil." Mine was filled with photographs, programmes, and countless souvenirs. My Uncle Oliver professed to find in it more evidence of merrymaking than of erudition; but I assure him our college life went deeper than beribboned programmes or even examination papers. And now Class-Day and Commencement had deposited their records among my memorabilia: all had

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happened as set down in the other memorabilia of our class, "Two College Girls." Rosamond Mills had carried off the honors of Class-Day; Edna Howe those of Commencement, though Florence Fay, to my thinking, had surpassed them both, as Class Poet. I took no honors; I had to be content with hearing myself called a good committee woman. Here again Uncle Oliver inquired if I had ever organized anything but "good times," and asked when I should put my hand to the lever that lifts the world.

My father came to my defense. "In my opinion, Phœbe has got a training in efficiency that is not to be overlooked. I have kept my eye upon her. I am inclined to think they make useful women at her college. Phœbe has a good working mind," which was my kind father's way of saying that I was not brilliant.

My Uncle Oliver, however, demurred at the utilitarian view of education.

And now my college career was over, and this was my first day at home. It was a day spent in "settling": my room a chaos of pictures, clothes, notebooks, trunks, bags, boxes, and I at last sitting down in the midst to rest, my great red book across my knees.

It was not half so much my room as my mind that needed "settling." I was not what is called introspective, like my friend Florence; yet I had not escaped the selfconsciousness of the college girl. Why should I have wished to? Why should I not have examined myself along with the other lively phenomena of this interesting world? I turned the leaves of my great book, and I suddenly felt old with memories. I tried to remember what I was like in my freshman year; but to remember one's self, as every one knows, is one of the most difficult things to do. The Florence Fay of four years ago was present to me, clearly enough. Some time before that, her mother had died; a year later, her father had married again. She had longed to go to college ardently, romantically; but while her invalid mother had lived, she had given up her great desire. "Ah, the things you have so wished for, Phæbe, why do they come at last in such a sad, sad way? Now they even want me to go to college, just to have me gone from home."

I can see her, as she sat in freshman classes, wearing her exalted look; but, in her most rapt expression, I could read her wistful, lonely girlhood. I can see her, but I cannot see myself. Could I have been like this laughing tintype, preserved on my first page? I did not, it is true, take my freshman year very seriously. My brother Tom and his friend, Gilbert Thorne, were by that time juniors at Harvard, and I had somehow gone to college with an idea of playing the game with them. If his studies sat lightly upon Tom, I determined

not to be a "grind" myself. I had felt that such an aim was a rather unworldly and uncalculating view of education, until I was summoned one day to the President's office, for a quiet talk with his secretary. Did I think I was doing what was quite fair all round, said this lady; to my father, for example? I did not answer, — I only looked at her; for instantly, in my mind, I saw my father in his Sunday coat, which began to show rusty out of doors. He had not had a new one since his younger children went to college. "Is it quite fair to us?" she continued; "has money been given for just this use of it?" It was honorable to remember, she said, that great part of our education was a benefit conferred. And was it quite fair to myself? Was I getting the most out of it? This alumna lady gave me pleasantly a bit of her own freshman experience, and when I was speechless with unshed tears, she summoned the next culprit. That quarterhour is clearly not one of the things which come under "meminisse juvabit." It proved salutary; and I gave up emulating college boys. I think it was my father's Sunday coat that did most to persuade me.

Though I worked honestly after that, I was never a distinguished student. "We must not be unreasonable in our ambitions," I had heard my father say; for he was modest, even for his children. "We have no great scholars in our family. All I want is to see Phæbe prepared as well as she can be for growing up in this new world, where more is expected of a woman than there used to be."

I turned another of my freshman pages, and laughed to myself over a mock Faculty meeting, in which I had impersonated the Dean. I fingered softly a dance-card, and studied certain initials; for we had danced the Old Year out in the first holidays at home.

In the sophomore year, studies suddenly grew harder; but we had the steady support of being able to look down upon the freshmen, even when we were kindest to them. The temptation of feeling superior began then and there. An alumna told me that ten years in the world would perhaps take it out of you; but there are some who never get rid of it.

Among the dance-cards, menus of spreads, and such like, there was, I reminded my uncle, an examination paper, with a big blue "A" at top, and not another mark upon it. "I know Powers," said Uncle Oliver; "he wakes up a girl like you, Phæbe, if he has to put dynamite under her;" for he gave our professor of history all the credit of my hardwon "A." Uncle Oliver was my mother's youngest brother, and the critic of our family.

When alumnæ of the old days assemble and make speeches now, they turn

laudatores temporis acti, and tell you of the great personalities that belonged to our time.

Professor Powers was one of these. When, years later, I found Browning's bold assertion,

"I fused my live soul and that inert stuff"; also,

"The life in me abolished the death of things," it was the great teacher of history of our college days that stood before me.

The big blue "A" done with a broad stroke of the master's pencil, — did it give him pleasure, too? Could he know that he had had the highest success of the teacher, since he had inspired a lasting interest in his subject?

There was a comparative repose about the junior year, if I may judge by the pages of my crimson book. Among the earlier leaves are synopses of history lectures, and a number of book lists of our literature teacher, in her own cherished handwriting. It is to be hoped that my Uncle Oliver saw these creditable memorials.

I turned pensively the later pages of the junior year. Here were pressed flowers and a bit of black and orange ribbon. I had forgotten these mementoes when I let my uncle examine my book. He did not fail to remind me of them. I reflected a little now, then removed the relics to my air-tight stove, and touched a match to them.

At the end of my junior year, Cousin Anne Dudley took me to Europe. That wonderful summer has several books to itself, of "things worthy to be remembered." Insert a European journey if you can between the junior and senior years of a college course. True, every one has not a Cousin Anne pleading loneliness in her widowhood, and her desire for young and cheerful companionship. The dear

lady could tell you that I kept up my reputation for cheerfulness that summer. It was all I could do to keep from prancing and dancing through Europe, and laughing and singing all the way. I indeed believe that that is the trouble with a good many Americans who mortify us with their behavior abroad: they are simply so excited and delighted that they do not know what they are about. Every girl has not a Cousin Anne to give a warning smile.

As I turned the leaves of my senior memorabilia, a great wave of nostalgia for my college past swept over me. It was gone forever, my student life, my youth! I gathered my big book in my arms and wept over its deep, sweet memories, and above all, those of the senior year, when everything we did was haunted with the thought that it was for the last time; when friendships grew firm on their foundations; when Faculty treated us as comrades and equals, and when the old college, every

vine and tree and stick and stone, took final possession of our hearts.

Drying my tears, I sorted the documents of graduation, not yet fastened in their places. I smiled to myself as I recalled our Class Historian in her confusion expounding as an uplifting motto the long name of our smallest muscle, levator labii superioris alæque nasi, instead of the proper words, Palma non sine pulvere. That was Rosamond Mills. I had liked her tremendously after I got over her being a Western girl, which is what Uncle Oliver calls my provincialism, I suppose. The map of the United States was one of the things I learned at college, I assured him.

Iread my Class-Day dance-card thoughtfully. Gilbert Thorne's handwriting, though less dashing than the initials, "P. L. B.," I rather liked. Mr. Paul Boynton had asked me to his Harvard Class-Day in my sixteenth year, and I had just now returned the invitation. There was a faded rose between my programme leaves, and this I carefully preserved.

My family had stood by me loyally through those memorable days of graduation. To judge by the June newspapers, commencements are no rare events; yet all over the land, when the roses bloom, youth is thrilling to the one and only experience of a lifetime.

The climax for us was the graduates' luncheon, to which we alumnæ who had just chipped our shells were invited. Here was heard our first "cheep, cheep," as we entered the world; for, by an old custom, one brand new alumna was chosen by her class to make a speech on this occasion. On what grounds she was selected, I could not tell; for it was I who was this time the appointed speaker. I think it was because I had no other part assigned me for Commencement, and my classmates felt a little sorry for me. When I rose to speak, they showed this by their

wild applause. They really would not let me begin, and I was afraid I should forget my speech. I dared not look at my classmates, for fear the tears would come. I kept my eyes on the older alumnæ at the upper end of the room. They were all amusement and sympathy, and joined loud in the clapping, to my still greater embarrassment. Wonderful, that on this day of days, a magic bit of parchment had made us the sisters and equals of those admirable ladies!

Good advice being the order of the day at the Commencement season, I fear my speech was crammed with it. I wonder if I told those gray-haired alumnæ how to grow old gracefully: I know I adjured my classmates to all "the things that are most excellent." I have heard many such speeches since that time, but I know that if only youth enough is put into platitudes, they somehow become fresh and appealing. I am sorry that I committed my little speech

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to the air-tight stove, for I know that its truisms had the dew of the morning on them.

That was the end. I closed the book of my college days. Life had begun.

THE CAREER OF A DAUGHTER

IT was on a Sunday in June that the family council sat to consider the career of the youngest daughter. Some of the nine brothers and sisters were "married and gone"; some were gone merely. Tom and I were all that were left at home. Tom having been taken into his father's business when college was over. My grandmother had lived with her daughter many years, somewhat in the character of matriarch, - dare I say it? My Uncle Oliver and his wife were in Boston, near at hand, and often spent a Sunday with us in the country. All these were present, when after dinner we betook ourselves to the north porch. Uncle Oliver placed his mother's favorite chair and escorted her to it, as a preliminary to lighting a cigar;

for smoking was a thing my grandmother regretted after she gave up forbidding it. "Wenn die Damen erlauben," said my Uncle Oliver, with a magnificent German bow. My father had never smoked—one reason why his mother-in-law had favored his suit in the beginning, and ever after had looked kindly upon him.

"Are you sure you are quite comfortable, mother? The smoke doesn't trouble you?" asked her son, after his cigar was well under way.

"Is your Alice going to sing for us?" was her reply.

"Not quite so soon after dinner, dear mother," said Mrs. Oliver Wise, laying her hand on the arm of my grandmother's chair. Our lovely Aunt Alice came out of the West, and belied everything that Boston believed of Chicago. "Here is Phæbe just home," she said. "We want to hear Phæbe talk about college."

"You can do that easy," said my brother Tom rudely. "She don't talk about much of anything else."

"What are you going to do with Phœbe, now you've got her polished off, Brother James?"

"That is for Phœbe to say herself," answered my father.

"Keep her here to help thaw out Still Waters," said Uncle Oliver, who had lived until lately in the West. "I'd like to teach 'em how to shake hands."

"You are hard on New England," said my mother gently. "There are no better people when you know them."

"That's just it. Don't the Bible say, 'Do good and communicate'? Incommunicableness is what ails 'em. Now Phœbe ain't troubled that way."

"I bet she ain't," cried Tom.

"Such language!" said I, with dignity.

"This question of a career for Phæbe Gay is what I want to see settled," Uncle

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Oliver continued. "That is what Alice and I are here for to-day."

I tossed my head, delighted to hear myself talked about.

"I should like to hear you speak seriously, my son. You don't want to send Phæbe away again?" My grandmother's voice trembled. It was she who had taken hardest my going away to college.

Said Uncle Oliver, "I advocate the career of a daughter. I remember a gibe in your Class-Day prophecy about the girl who was going home to be a comfort to her mother. That did n't strike me pleasantly."

"I should n't wish to be selfish," said my mother wistfully. "I would never stand in the way of my children's best good."

"You mothers are at it all the time, turning out a brood of selfish children because you efface yourselves and ask nothing in return. You will have only alternate generations of decent men and women, don't you see?"

Aunt Alice's sweet face saddened; for there were no children in her home.

"Well, well," said my grandmother; "then, Phæbe Gay, you and I are a warning, and your mother's unselfishness has been the ruin of us both. I've often thought you spoiled me, my dear daughter," she said tenderly. In these years since my grandfather's death, she had softened, we all said: there was less of the old tang in her speeches.

"Let us keep to the point, Oliver," said my father. "I believe I am the moderator of this meeting. The fact seems to be that four people right here need Phœbe."

"Me, for one," cried Tom.

"We have had her away four years," said my father, in his plain speech. "That is a good while to give her up. She probably did n't know what it cost us."

Not I, — hard-hearted young thing that I was!

"But what does Phœbe say herself?" my reasonable father continued. "Perhaps she has been planning a career."

"I know a way that I could probably earn a living," I said slowly, "but if I did it well and made a grand success of it, I should n't have time for anything else. I am not going to tell you what it is; I might not succeed," I laughed.

"I know very well," said my mother, with all her sympathy. "Is your heart set on it, Phœbe?"

Uncle Oliver answered for me. "If my niece were a genius, so that we should be depriving the world of what she owes it, the case would be different. I don't in my heart believe Phœbe is a genius, though Phœbe 's a nice girl."

"Oh, Uncle Oliver, is that all I am?"

"If you want my serious opinion, you

are a woman who can be most useful in a woman's natural sphere. If you think that is n't flattering, all I can say is, the world has come to a pretty pass."

"I'll take you into business, if you say so," said my father happily. "I tried you once, you remember, in your sixteenth year. J. B. Callender, Son and Daughter, - why not?"

"It is I that need a partner in my business," said my mother. "I have just had a letter from an old friend, who is going abroad, and who is to leave her daughter to keep house in her absence. My friend says she is taking this means of interesting her daughter in her home again. She has never been willing to stay in it since she went to college."

"There you have her! What did I tell you about the alternate generations?"

"As for bread and butter, I guess there will be enough to go round," and my father smiled on me.

"Are there any young men hanging about?" inquired Uncle Oliver suddenly.

"Not one!" I answered.

"Ask me in private," said Tom.

"Don't let us wander. Let us get back to the point." The moderator rapped on the table.

"I should have said we had just arrived at the point, Brother James. We had been talking about the provisional career of woman. We had n't got to the real point at all."

"If you are going to talk about matrimony, I shall leave this company," said I with dignity; but I waited nevertheless for Uncle Oliver's next speech.

"Let us waive matrimony for the present," my father interposed.

"We want her for a few years," said my mother wistfully again. "Yet, if I saw that life in Still Waters, life in her home, cramped Phæbe's mind and character, I should not have a word to say. But our Phæbe has had opportunities more than many girls."

"I should think I had! I have had the best kind of a time ever since the very day I was born!"

My mother continued, "I remember the text of the baccalaureate sermon we heard a week ago to-day: 'Freely ye have received, freely give.'"

"I am glad to hear you speak up at last, Sister Sophie," said Uncle Oliver. "Parents don't expect enough of their children nowadays, and turn them loose on the world to have their selfishness thrashed out of them by the discipline of life. It better have been done at home, more of it. The divorce courts tell the story; selfishness is at the bottom of it; the selfishness of boys and girls is at the root of it."

"We are getting very far away from Phœbe," suggested the moderator kindly.

My mother went on with her little discourse. "And Phæbe will continue to

have advantages: we live only twenty-five miles from Boston. Cambridge and Concord are not far away. Still Waters may be quiet, but it is not benighted."

"There's more life out at our end where the wagon shops are, eh, father? They have n't got so much table-manners as the middle of the town, but those folks are the real thing, I tell you."

My father smiled on Tom. It had cheered the heart of that faithful father of a family that his youngest son, even after a respectable career at Harvard, had taken up his own business with ardor. Tom said he had an hereditary taste for wagons. Matter-of-fact my young brother certainly was, but to the subject of locomotion he brought not a little imagination. In the '70's, he dreamed of horseless wagons, and in his wildest moments said, "We'll fly yet! Just you live awhile longer just you hold on, father!"

Tom was, in his own language, a "good

mixer," which my father was not. The worst trouble he had ever known in his business came in my sixteenth year, and my mother truly said that it never would have happened if my father could have let his working-people know him. Tom's lively manners and his good heart were a business asset of Callender and Son.

"If Phœbe wants a career," said Tom, "all she's got to do is to move out our way and be a neighbor."

"If Phæbe wants to be useful, she will not need to go three miles out of town. There is neighboring enough to be done up and down this street."

"If Phœbe wants to be useful," said my father, "let her show her bright face at breakfast, when I set out for my day, and let her meet me when I come home tired. What I should like," he said, with his kind smile, "is that our girl should sit down at table a while with her father and brother."

"I shan't say how much I need Phœbe," said my mother.

"I shall," spoke up my grandmother. "Every grandmother needs a Phæbe."

"If I just stay on at home, I wonder if I shall forget all I have learned," I reflected, in a moment of concern for my education.

"Phæbe, if you take my advice," began Uncle Oliver, with deliberation, "you will make up your mind what you would like to know more about. Then put some real study into it,—mature, woman's study. The thing is to come out of college with a thoroughly interested mind."

"Oh, yes! Everything is interesting! Everything gives me ideas!"

"And keep on with your education. I would have another kind of university club founded for organizing a continuous education,—one that does n't stop till you do. People drop their education, as ladies drop their music when they marry."

"Oliver," said my father, "we never could have brought up our family without your help."

"Keep an eye on that young man, is my parting advice. I don't mean Tom. My wife, we must n't lose our train back to Boston."

Uncle Oliver looked at his watch, and the council broke up.

I had been so talked over that I had the sensation of a gentle pommeling; I felt tingling and alive and ready to begin -everything! I did begin by getting the Sunday night supper, Nora being "out."

"After this," I announced, "mistress mother, you have nothing whatever to do with Sunday night meals."

"Give us something hot," called Tom after me.

"We are always likely to have some one drop in," said my mother. "Gilbert Thorne's father is away; I told him to come in. The old housekeeper will be glad to be excused from a meal. She eats from the pantry shelves whenever she has the chance. I wish she didn't give them so many cold meals—as she explained to me, 'to save the house from gettin' het up with a big kitchen fire.' She says she hates these new-fangled ways the newspapers are so full of,—finicky ways to make you trouble about your work." With a sudden change of tone, my mother asked of my father an apparently irrelevant question, "When is Mr. Christopher Sadler likely to make us another visit?"

Monday morning the career began. Be sure I smiled upon my father at breakfast, and even sent him off smiling at one of his own grave jokes,—for I pointed out to him how funny it was.

I always thought "fun" came down to me from my grandmother, and I told her so when I carried up her breakfast tray that morning.

"Yes, yes; your mother is more like

your grandfather, dear saint he was. You and I, Phæbe, love our joke, — we're always wicked enough for that." And the notion of wickedness was so humorous to the old lady that she laughed again. "Don't you go to spilling that cream, child! Both of us laughing at nothing, poor fools! That's what it is to have you at home, Phæbe Gay!"

"Yes," said my mother, when we went out together that morning, "I am willing to tell you now how much it cost me to let my last daughter go away to college. You hear about the sacrifices of parents: that is the great sacrifice. Marriage may come, in course of time, but that is natural. Giving you up to be educated, just as we have become companions for each other, and just as you have become most interesting to watch in your growth into womanhood,—oh, Phæbe, to give you up to strangers, to even the best of teachers,—Phæbe, it wrings a mother's heart."

"Why, mother, mother, I never supposed—"

"It was better for you then to go away,—that made it right, and made me able to bear it. If I thought it were better for you now to go out into the world alone, you should go; but I do not believe it. And remember, four people, at least, need you, dear. That is a good many, after all. To be needed is the thing that makes a woman happiest. Some people are not; you have only to look around this town. There are none I pity so much."

"There is Florence Fay," I answered; "everybody is saying, 'her stepmother will have to have her at home now she is through college.' Florence thinks she shall stay with her New York cousins some of the time, and part of the year in Europe. Not much like my home to come back to! Yet she lives in the finest house in the town, with the most money and the most taste. We might have more taste in ours,

mother, even without much money," I said, dropping suddenly into another tone.

My mother had been married when taste in furniture was Early Victorian, and the American variety of that. New Englanders had pushed back their colonial furniture under the garret eaves, and ripened pears in the mahogany drawers.

"Since they went to the Centennial," my mother replied, "ladies in Still Waters have had a great many new ideas."

"Let us make our house beautiful," I cried. "That is the business of a daughter, if anything is."

We met neighbors as we went our way ladies abroad on morning errands, in summer marketing toilets. "My husband says he can always tell meat I've just ordered; and it's the same with berries. Marketing is a different thing if you have a husband, you know, Mrs. Callender. Are n't you pleased to have Phœbe at home? Is she home for good?"

Every one we met looked me over, appearing somewhat surprised to see me by my mother's side. "Do you expect to keep her at home?" they would ask. All were curious about that career we had discussed on Sunday. Those were the early days when a college education for women had not yet justified itself as a means of Life: it was expected to lead at least to a livelihood, if not to a career.

Said the next neighbor, "Now my daughter Ruth has seen Phæbe go, nothing will do but she must go, too. It runs all round a town. I don't know whether to encourage it or not." She examined me as if I might shed light on her perplexity. How I wonder if I did! "I shan't say but she may," the mother concluded, "but it will take a good deal to persuade her father. I wish you would come over and see us, Phæbe, and not talk college much, but just be round a little."

Another lady was of different temper.

"I am going to lose my Nan in the fall," she said gayly. "You will have to come and see me then and talk college. Nan wants to ask you a lot of questions now."

"Tell Nan to come over to supper tonight," said my mother. — "You need n't carry all my parcels, child," she remonstrated, as we turned our steps towards home.

I looked down the elm-shaded street, at the white houses with their green blinds and with their orderly front dooryards. The same pretty little river moved slowly through our town that later watered the Concord meadows. Within that other township, the stream grew historic and interesting, as also in the next town of Twinbridge; but in our corner of the county life had been much less stirring. We had no shrines of authors or heroes to boast of. While we were a pattern of thrift and respectability, we were, in truth, only a seventeenth-century New England town

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which knew not enough of its own early life to appreciate its romance; and which, save for its lone monument of the Civil War, bore no trace of history on its peaceful face.

BROKEN HEARTS

FLORENCE and I had been home from college for a month or more when one idle afternoon we took to the river, and rowed to our favorite spot, a little shaded promontory, where the stream made a sudden turn. Hither we carried our work, a book, and a packet of chocolate, and here we encamped for an afternoon. The only thing thoroughly disposed of was the chocolate: the work went on languidly, for who could set stitches with attention, while that gleaming river ran softly by, while the meadow and the feeding cattle made a picture of ever-changing shadows! A book fared little better; moreover, if it have the breath of life in it, a book is provocative of talk.

"It makes you think, of course, and

thinking is talking, when it's you and I together, Phœbe Gay; and the talking only makes you think the more. They don't know, the other people, how much college girls enjoy each other's minds. You make me have ideas."

"But you always were intellectual, even 'way back when you went to dancing-school, Florence; you have n't changed a bit. I have grown older, years older since I went to college." I cast down my sewing; for at twenty-one, growing old is too fascinating a subject to be mingled with dull and placid "over-and-over." "I have learned a great deal in this last year, in this last month," I said, with a pretty melancholy. "I begin to see that life is neither one thing nor the other; it is both."

"Phœbe! Tell me!"

I smiled pensively. "It is not the kind of knowledge you think, — it's not out of books. It is a kind that makes you grow

old faster than any other," said I, proud of this discovery.

"Something about Mr. Paul! I knew it!"

"I have n't told you," I said mysteriously.

"I suspected it, because you have hardly mentioned his name since Class-Day. Then he was so devoted that that married sister swooped down—"

"That Sister Esther!"

"Simply snatched him away. I saw her do it!"

"I have n't told you yet," I repeated.

"Phœbe Gay, you are n't engaged?"

"He is, not I," I laughed with a gayety that I fancied had bitterness in it.

"Phœbe, Phœbe, I am so glad!"

"His family saw to it that he didn't marry a little country nobody without a penny," I said, drawing myself up proudly. For I did indeed believe that "Doant thou marry for munny, but goa wheer munny is," had been in effect Mr. Paul's instructions. "Yes," I continued with firm voice,

"Cousin Anne Dudley's letter a week ago told all about it, and this morning I had one of those little friendship notes from him —"

"The wretch!" said Florence, fierce on my behalf.

"He always did write charming little letters, a model to Tom and Gilbert Thorne. I wish you could see a letter Gilbert was obliged to write me once,—stiff as a broomstick, though we've known each other all our lives. And as for Tom, he never writes anything but postal cards. But Mr. Paul—funny how that old name lasts, as if I were sixteen yet!—Mr. Paul had grace," I sighed.

"Grace!" echoed Florence, through her teeth.

"The thing that he particularly requests is that Miss Poindexter and I should be great friends."

"Bah!" said my loyal friend. "Pray, who is she?"

"Precisely what you would expect: with any amount of family and money and looks. Even Cousin Anne says it is perfectly suitable and both families are delighted."

"It is a hairbreadth escape for you, Phœbe Gay," said my faithful friend.

"Yet all this time, ever since my first visit to New York," I said plaintively, "you have taken such an interest, Florence,—you always wanted to hear everything, and now you seem to be glad to be rid of him."

"Glad, indeed!" said Florence, with spirit.

"I always told you it was nothing but friendship; how many times did I tell you? Don't go to imagining that I have a broken heart! But I do feel as if I had been through a good deal, for me!" For I could not resist luxuriating a little in emotion while I had the chance.

Nor could Florence. "Phæbe Gay, don't

pretend. You did care a little. It was a long time that you were thinking of him, and he of you. You were always *there*, to each other," sighed Florence.

"Why, how do you know, dear?"

"Such things go right through college with a girl often, and I think they are beautiful! They irradiate everything; they inspire a girl." She said it so ardently that her eves filled with tears. She made me feel quite broken-hearted about Mr. Paul; and curiously enough, the more miserable I was, the better I seemed to be enjoying myself. We indulged in heartrending reminiscences of the past: college occasions when Mr. Paul had been my admired guest; the summer in Europe when he had happened upon Cousin Anne's party by so many strange accidents, my visits to New York when his sister Esther had stood guard so assiduously.

"However," said Florence, "it is the most fortunate thing in all your life that it

stopped just where it did. You are for better things than that, Phæbe Gay. You were not to be wasted on the smart set."

I suppose she and I had this habit of speech, by which two friends sustain each other: as Bacon long ago remarked, a friend may say the thing you cannot say for yourself. I was sore-hearted, but it did cross my mind that Mr. Paul was of rather slight stuff, or he would not have been so easily handled by a worldly family. Some wholesome pique was mixed with my melancholy. Mr. Paul had served his purpose, I said to myself: he had been useful and ornamental to my college course, a pretty appendage to my more earnest pursuits. He and I had talked about our friendship: we had never used a more serious word for it. And why should n't we have been left in peace? It was my officious classmates who would have it otherwise, and Florence Fay, I could but remember now, was most romantic of them all. I had never detected her in romance of her own, well as I knew her heart, but she loved it on behalf of others. After years of egging me on, she owed me now some reparation in the way of sympathy.

I told her she was a jewel of consistency.

"I was only making the best of Mr. Paul, because I thought you liked him. Yet I never believed you were really in earnest."

"Oh, dear, I don't know. Sometimes I was, and sometimes I was n't!"

"Then it was not the real thing," said Florence sagely. "You will get over your broken heart, Phœbe Gay." Her lip quivered and her voice was full of tears. "I shall never get over mine," she said tragically.

"You, Florence! What do you mean, you dear girl? I never knew you to take the slightest interest in any man outside of a book."

"I never told you, I never told you! There is no use in telling you now. It is all over."

"It was n't fair," I reproached her; "it was n't fair not to tell me when I told you everything. Have I ever seen him?"

"No."

"Was it parents?"

"No," said Florence, miserably.

"Then what?"

"Oh, don't," Florence pleaded.

"If you told me, we might see a way. When was it, to begin with?"

"Last summer, in Europe."

"Oh, Florence, not a duke or a lord?"

"I had lessons with him. He taught me. He was no one I could marry; I knew

that of myself."

"Did he have a wife?" I asked, in wholesome horror.

"I never knew that he had."

"Tell me about him."

"Poor and not young and not long to

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live, but such a mind, such a spirit! A poet if ever poet lived!"

"Florence, dear Florence! I feel so sorry, but all the same, I am glad you had to come home. Do you write letters to each other, tell me!"

"He died."

"Oh!" I breathed softly, and looked at her with a new feeling.

"I shall never marry," she said. "There is enough for me to do; you don't have to be a burden." She looked all about her as if she saw wide fields and long distances. "I don't see," she said, "what brokenhearted women do without an education."

I did not smile at that, for I saw that her case was more tragic than mine. I hesitated at good advice.

"I don't stay miserable long at a time," I observed, to encourage Florence. "Somehow I can't."

"That is your temperament," she answered sadly.

"Yet I will own to you, and nobody else, that for as much as a week I was pretty miserable. I had all the symptoms of a broken heart, whatever that may be. I didn't let my family see, you better believe. If you want my remedy, Florence Fay, it's just our old motto we got from Mr. Hale: 'Look up and not down, forward and not back, out and not in, and lend a hand.'" I had my grandmother's love of a "remedy," even for affairs of the heart. "In fact," I continued, quite cheerful again, "in fact, with love affairs disposed of, the way is clear for a career."

"Oh, Phœbe," sighed Florence, "you are so businesslike about it: I wish I could be as sensible; but I never can forget, and my heart aches and aches, and there is no help for it."

"Somebody else, as soon as possible," I cried with zeal.

"No, no! But you have so many people

46 HOW PHŒBE FOUND HERSELF to love you, Phæbe. I am so alone, it frightens me."

"Now you have come home from college, Florence, you must try to get over your shyness of Still Waters. They ought to get over their shyness of you. They think you are such a princess, and of course you are. I heard somebody saying about you, the other day: 'She has everything: she doesn't want this little town. She will be marrying some rich man. There is nobody in Still Waters would suit her ideas, especially since she has been to college.' That woman said it in a yearning, disappointed way, as if she had had romantic hopes of your coming home to make Still Waters interesting. How is a town to be interesting if people get away from it as fast as ever they can? That was old Mr. Christopher Sadler's idea, precisely. Let's stay, all of us, and see what happens!"

Florence said sadly, "It makes very

little 'difference to anybody where I stay."

To divert her, I fell to enlarging upon my own woes. I harrowed my feelings and hers, with reminiscences of Mr. Paul, and speculations about Miss Poindexter. Suddenly said Florence, "Phæbe, I am going to stop sympathizing with you, because I am just pretending. Imagine you a fashionable woman, going the society rounds, — should you have liked that?"

"One side of me would," I answered meekly. "I like society."

"So do I—real society. But see my stepmother; see what fashionable society makes of a woman. She has no resources; no children: for you can't call me one. She pines and mopes in Still Waters till my father takes her to New York or Europe. I believe she is lonelier than ever now that I have come home from college. A stepdaughter is bad enough, but a col-

lege stepdaughter is worse, I can see that with my own eyes. When I look myself over, I am really quite sorry for her."

"So am I!" I said so heartily that Florence threw back her head, accused.

"I suppose you think I ought to be a 'resource,'" she said.

"I certainly do."

"I would do anything I could to make my father's home happy," said Florence gently and thoughtfully.

We sat silent for a little while, watching the quiet river.

"I hear oars, I hear voices," said I suddenly.

Round the bend of the stream came Tom and Gilbert Thorne, rowing as if for a silver cup. We shouted and waved our handkerchiefs.

"Hullo!" they answered across the water, pulling in their oars and drifting to our shore. "You'd do better to let us row

you home. You're going to be late to supper anyway."

I jumped into Tom's boat without a word, and left Gilbert to row Florence home in hers.

Long afterwards I learned that Cousin Anne Dudley had informed my parents with no small satisfaction that Mr. Paul was engaged to marry Miss Poindexter; for our cousin had felt responsible for an acquaintance that she had begun to view with considerable foreboding. My father and mother had exchanged a glance when the letter was read, a glance that I studied until I saw its meaning.

IV

A GREAT REFUSAL

A NUMBER of years before this summer of which I write, a native of Still Waters, later a resident of Iowa, had returned to visit the town. He was rich and childless, and had wished "to do something for old Still Waters," as he put it to my father. This gentleman from Iowa spent a week in our neighborhood, and looked sharply about him. "The thing I don't like the looks of," said Mr. Christopher Sadler, "is the way the young folks leave the old town. Look at your own boys and girls. How many of 'em have shaken the dust from their feet?"

"Well, six, so far," my father smiled.

"I am glad I have one daughter, Lilian, married in the town," said my mother.

Mr. Christopher Sadler looked over his

spectacles at Tom and me. "These two'll be making for Seattle, I reckon. If you are going West, young man, you don't need to go further than Ioway. But I tell you, Jim, this thing's got to stop, or there won't be any old Massachusetts: it 'll pass into the hands of aliens." There was genuine concern in Mr. Sadler's benevolent face.

My father deliberated. He always saw at least two sides to a question, and usually more. "I don't deny that we parents want to keep them, but they must go where there is opportunity. That's what America stands for, opportunity."

"Opportunity for what?" Mr. Sadler was getting excited. "I suppose you think I stand for money. Well, I do, because money is opportunity, and I won't deny, either, it's sport to make it. But I hate to hear folks talk as if opportunity meant money-makin' and nothin' else. I say a man in Still Waters has got an opportunity

to lead a good, rational, useful life — look at James B. Callender!"

My father shook his head. "Our young men don't think so."

At this Mr. Sadler got angry, and had to be soothed with praise of Iowa.

Not long afterwards he told my father in confidence that he had made up his mind not to endow a library or a hospital in Still Waters, but to endow a man! He would leave to his nearest relative there, young Gilbert Thorne, such a fortune as would enable him to live in the town and be a good citizen. Nothing was to be said to Gilbert about the matter until he should reach his twenty-first birthday.

Four years passed, which Gilbert spent in college, along with my brother Tom. In the meanwhile, our friend Mr. Sadler lost his excellent wife, and after that made more frequent visits to his native town. He was often my mother's guest, and we grew well acquainted with the genial, eccentric old gentleman. Tom and I made a business of reporting to Mr. Sadler every honor won by Gilbert, until, satisfied that his young man was a credit to him, he awaited at our house the day when, near the end of the college course, he should make his great announcement. My father shared Mr. Sadler's excitement, and being the family man he was, could not but impart it to the rest of us. I was at home for the Easter vacation when Mr. Sadler's visit took place.

"Old Christopher is on hand," said my father. "He wired me to-day."

"I'd call him Mr. Sadler, dear, for the sake of Tom," my gentle mother remonstrated.

I was agog with romance, for I had long ago named Mr. Sadler a fairy god-father.

"The Thornes have not been exactly poor," my mother reflected; "but Judge

"I'd like to see him fat up," said Tom.
"I'd like to see Bert Thorne have a fire in his room at college oftener 'n he does. He'll have three years now in the Law School. I'm glad I'm going into business. Six weeks more of college for me!"

"Old Christopher likes to have a little play out of it, a little scene. He's got it all arranged: he's got some fun in him, the old boy. I told him to make himself at home in my counting-room, and he's going to send for the young man to come there. I'd give something to see that interview, — or, no, I would n't; I don't believe I could stand it."

"I know I could n't," said my mother. "It will be touching. That lonely old man

adopting for heir the child of his first love, for it is easy to see that he once adored his Cousin Mary."

"Oh, mother, you are every bit as romantic as I am," I cried. "It gives me thrills to think of it! We know them both so well, and Mr. Sadler and I have got to be such good friends. It is n't every day you get such a good chance for a thrill!"

"Thrill away," said Tom. "We'll see how it comes out."

These words of Tom's were ominous; for it did not "come out" at all. It turned tragic, and altogether different from a fairy story. Mr. Sadler described the interview to my father, and he to us. We sat about that Sunday night, pain and disappointment in the face of every one of us. For this was the story my father told.

"Christopher is getting old," he began.
"We shall all be getting old some day."
We waited for him to go on. "He's got a fixed idea, and you can't cross him."

Again we had to wait. "His fixed idea is his native town. Seems to think he did it some sort of wrong when he turned his back on it fifty years ago."

"While I say," my grandmother spoke up, "he did just right then, and he does just right now: youth is one thing, age is another."

My father was that incomparable sonin-law, who never loses a chance to applaud his mother-in-law's wisdom. "There are not many, mother, who see that as you do. You can't expect youth and age to think alike. That is just where old Christopher makes his mistake."

"Pray let us hear your story," said my mother.

We were dying to hear it, she and I, impatient of this little dissertation on "crabbed age and youth."

"Drive ahead, father," said Tom.

"Christopher sat in his chair in my counting-room, — can't you see him,

swelling with his idea, beaming all over with it,—waiting there, all ready to lay a corner stone, as it were, and make a handsome speech. Poor old fellow! I declare to Heaven, I pity him!"

"Pray tell us what happened," said my mother.

"Then appears young Thorne, looking considerably puzzled as to what he was wanted for. He was there on time, and stood up straight and tall. 'I told him to sit down and have a quiet talk,' said Christopher. 'It was a thing I had been thinking of so long it would take a little time to explain.'"

"And Bert sat down and never said a word, I'll be bound," said Tom. "I know Bert."

So did I know Gilbert Thorne, and I could imagine him facing Mr. Sadler. There was a pride and independence about Gilbert Thorne that made him a little difficult to deal with, even his school-

mates had found out. Personal dignity, my mother called it; but Tom had a rough school-boy word for the quality. I had had an intuition that that interview would not be altogether plain sailing for good Mr. Christopher Sadler. I listened intently to my father.

"You are right, Tom; Bert never said a word: he made it hard for Mr. Sadler. The old man's voice shook when he told me."

"The boy must have been touched," said my mother. "Such evidence of confidence and affection must have moved him deeply."

"You forget he is n't a girl. You forget he is n't our Phœbe Gay. Christopher said that he thanked him for the tribute to his mother, but told him flatly that he could not bind himself to spend his life as a citizen of Still Waters,—that was the amount of the interview."

There was a silence among us. This

declaration of Gilbert Thorne fell on my heart with a strange thud. Still Waters looked a place that had outlived all youth and adventure. It seemed gray and lifeless and gone to decay. A lifetime spent here stretched before me colorless and dreary. Tom was looking at me curiously, for I had the habit of showing my thoughts in my face. My second feeling was one of keen disappointment in the last page of a story that I had long been following. I had a girlish view of a fortune, and to refuse one out of hand was, to my simple theory of wealth, a painful anticlimax.

"The poor old man was quite broken up when he told me," my father continued. "I argued with him, for I saw the young man's side of it. I have n't forgotten I was young once. But the trouble was, I was one of Christopher's arguments," said my father modestly.

Tom took up the word. "He told you

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that you were the best all-round American
citizen he knew!"

"I am sorry," said my mother, "for Mary's sake. That her son should live on in the town she loved, with the power to do good that money gives, would have seemed a fulfillment of her life. I am afraid Gilbert has a stubborn temper."

Still I said nothing, but looked at Tom, who did not hesitate to give his opinion. "He's an awful fool to make the old fellow mad. He might easy enough make it all right with him, give in a little here and there. But that ain't Bert Thorne."

"No, my son, you are wrong there," said my father. "I suppose the boy did n't put his great refusal with quite the tenderness that your mother would, but he was right and I'll stand by him. Youth should not be asked to give promises of that nature, and money should not be made to enter into the matter. I'd have told Sadler

so years ago, if I'd thought he was so serious about it. He is an old sentimentalist; he wants to be—"

"A fairy godfather," I put in; "that's what we used to call him."

"I should like to talk with Mr. Sadler," said my mother gently.

"That's right: you and your mother and Phœbe take him in hand. I leave him to you. You can labor with the other party, too. I own I'm sick of the whole business."

"I shall never mention the subject to either of them," said I passionately.

"Where will Mr. Sadler leave his money, I should like to inquire?" asked my practical grandmother.

"In Iowa, no doubt," my father replied, and we gave a disappointed sigh.

A few days later our friend came to bid us good-bye. It was a dismal call. I had such a reputation for cheerfulness that I could sometimes afford to be miserable; and miserable I was, over the turn affairs had taken. My mother was called from the room, and I contrived to say to Mr. Sadler that I was very sorry he was going away from Still Waters.

"Fine old town, eh? You love it, don't ye, young miss?" He took a long, shrewd look at me, that melted into the expression of an affectionate grandfather. "You love it, don't ye? You won't ever get those elms out our way," he continued. "I'd like to wake up in heaven and see that Main Street of Still Waters, and Mary and your mother walking down it—and my good wife that's gone. I don't want anything better'n that, the Lord knows. Well, it won't be long."

"Mr. Sadler," said I, seconding my mother, "why don't you come and live right now in Still Waters? We should all love to have you, I hope you know that."

"Oh, young lady," — the sentimentalist vanished, and the keen old business man gleamed from his eyes, — "oh, my young

lady, you little understand the interests I've got to look after. Can't turn my back on them." Mr. Sadler was all at once a younger man, and I felt better about him. "We are laying out streets in a new Addition and there's going to be money in it, — but it needs my eye kept right on it: things change from day to day." He turned to my father: "Jim, that obstinate young chap won't change his mind."

I rose and said, "Mr. Sadler, do come back here to live and be our neighbor," and so shook hands with him and got myself out of the room. But as I went down the passage, I heard voices earnest behind me, and Mr. Sadler's rising passionately, "If he don't give in, by George! I know who I will leave it to!"

These events had taken place two years or more before my return from college. When I came home and entered upon my career of daughter, Gilbert Thorne had finished his first two years in the Law

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School, and was beginning to talk about the Far Northwest.

Said Tom one day, "We miss old Christopher; he don't come round so much as he used to."

"Say 'Mr. Sadler,'" entreated my mother. "And why should you call everybody 'old'?"

"I bet he misses us. He was getting fond of us all round." Tom heaved a prodigious sigh. "Pity he thinks so much of your being blood relations. When we used to go round with him, he got on a sight better with me than he ever did with Bert. He brought out all Bert's stiffness, just because he was sharp enough to guess Chris—Mr. Sadler might be leaving him money. But here am I, settled for life all right, and looking round for a wife."

"Tom!" my mother and I gasped together.

"I'm just what Christopher's after, only I ain't his cousin."

"I don't hear quite so well as I did,— I lose the thread," said my grandmother. "I wish you would repeat to me slowly what Tom has just said."

"Grandma," — I spoke with great distinctness, — "it's that old muddle about Mr. Christopher Sadler's leaving his money so as to do good to Still Waters. Nobody will do anything that anybody else wants them to," said I, lucidly.

"It will all work out. I have faith to believe it will work out."

No one could gainsay this, and for a long time we dropped the subject.

THE DUFFINS

THE three generations, as Tom called us, were seated with our work on the shady porch one summer afternoon.

"Mother," said I, all at once, "did you notice what our Tom said about looking round for a wife? I am frightened to death."

"What have you seen?" asked my mother calmly.

"Cora Duffin," said I darkly: "that's what I've seen."

She laughed and then drew down her mouth.

"When there stands Florence Fay, simply perfect for a daughter or a sister."

"But it is a wife we are talking about. Florence would be as unsuited to Tom as Cora, almost."

"Nobody is good enough for Florence

Fay, I think myself," I rejoined. "But oh, mother, Cora Duffin! Her very name! Everything! Why, her humming is enough."

"I often wonder at that girl," said my mother thoughtfully. "It seems as if college life should have done more for her. She went into college with bad manners, and she came out with bad manners."

"You can't make a silk purse," — my grandmother paused, — "unless you have the proper materials."

"She was a thorn to me in college: she fastened herself upon me because we both came from the same town; and now we are home, she sticks to me because we were at college together."

"I think I have seen you and Cora apparently having a very good time in each other's company."

"Oh, she always did think I was a sociable sort of person. There's always something to laugh about!"

"When two young people get together," my mother finished. "Well, I am glad there is."

"I have always said the Duffins were good neighbors," my grandmother spoke up, — "very friendly with their vegetables."

My mother pointed out other excellent qualities, for she had the fine discrimination which sees the good traits of vulgar people. I saw not one!

"Oh, but common," said I, of the younger generation. "And the young Duffins commoner than the old ones, because they've conceit added. It is a relief that Harold thought Still Waters a 'hole.' I wish it would strike Cora that way. She misses him dreadfully, she says, though they were always quarreling."

Cora's relatives belonged to that plane of society in which family scolding is thought facetious, and family rudeness one of the comforts of home. You noticed that they were more polite to their maidof-all-work than to any one else: she could "leave."

"As for Cora," I continued gloomily, "she is the very pattern of the girl you don't want your brother to marry."

"I wonder still what was missing in her education. She is very bright, very well-informed; but education should refine as well."

"Don't blame college, mother. What could you expect to make of a Duffin?"

So I doubt not the mutual recrimination between home and college will go on to the end. Cora's father had been heard to declare that college had spoiled his daughter's manners. Cora, it is true, had fits of "behavior," when she was profuse in protest and apology; but it was when she tried to be "gracious" that I found her most trying. Cora was strong on points of etiquette, and deplored the ignorance of simple Still Waters.

"She is pretty, no one can deny that; but she will be exactly like her mother when she is her age. Look at Mrs. Duffin! Moreover, it is something worse than mere manners: Cora enjoys saying things that you can think over till they hurt. Imagine that in a wife, of all things! Imagine that in our Tom's wife!"

"She will outgrow that; she will soften," said my gentle mother.

"Let me hear what you say," came from my grandmother; for we had been talking in low tones. Some of my remarks about the Duffins I repeated in her ear.

"Poor stock!" was all that she vouchsafed, though she would not forget the tomatoes and cucumbers that passed over the garden fence.

"And her clothes, mother! We don't want those clothes in our family!"

"Yet she is so young and so pretty that she can wear anything, and you smile if you see her coming. You have to be as old as I am to feel the charm of youth, Phæbe."

"Or a boy like Tom," I sighed.

"You are just the one to judge Cora Duffin most hard, I am afraid."

"I know her," said I fiercely; "and I know she means to marry our Tom if she can, and I know we ought to stop it. We ought to protect him. That's the very thing we are for. That's one thing I am here at home for, and I mean to do it."

My mother laughed. "Are we to form ourselves into a committee, grandma and you and I?"

"Family opposition don't do a grain of good," interposed my grandmother.

"It only makes romance out of it," my mother assented. "It is best to ignore it as the unlikeliest thing in the world."

"Seems to me, from what I manage to hear, these young folks' thoughts run a good deal on matrimony."

"What can you expect, dear mother, in

the twenties? Well, Phæbe, if you are going to have a committee of defense, you might better put your father on it: he sees most of Tom."

"Not of the least use. Why, when Cora sang the other night, father clapped louder than Tom even. We have been such a comfortable family so far," I went on sorrowfully; "we have liked all our relations-in-law, every last one of them." My mother, I had noticed, had a happy faculty of saying kind things about one "in-law" to another. Blessed are the family peacemakers!

At this point in our conversation, Cora Duffin herself opened the front gate, and came up the walk. "Hullo, Phœbe!" she cried to me. "How d'e do, Mrs. Callender? When did you get back? Oh, how d'e do, Mrs. Wise? Phœbe, I wish you'd tell Tom he's got to come over and practice those songs to-night."

My mother's instinct of cordiality was

beyond her control: she could not but smile upon Cora and beg her to sit down. "Your mother is away?" she said.

"H-m, h-m," replied Cora, by way of a "Yes." "Harold's coming home for Sunday. I told him to bring up some of his fellows." Cora had flung herself into a chair in front of my grandmother. "I could n't stand Still Waters if it was n't for Tom and a few others."

"So you are giving your mother a vacation? Phæbe has made me take one. She organizes vacations for everybody she can lay hands on."

"Phæbe's got vacations on the brain, don't you understand?" said Cora agreeably. "She thinks it's all that ails people—not having'em. Sorry I have n't another ginger-snap to offer you. Mother says she sh'd suppose I'd got over the ginger-snap habit by this time. Dad thinks I'm perfectly dreadful, anyway, since I went to college. Oh, but I am glad to get home

and get something to eat, — something you can eat."

Suddenly, Cora changed her tone completely, and even with a different face, said to me, "Say, Phœbe, did you see Professor Anthony's article in the 'Continental Monthly'? That article was a corker!"

I had not seen it: Cora was much brighter than I in such matters. "Don't you keep up? What did you go to college for?" she reproached me.

I meekly answered that such subjects were beyond me. "But I do read history," I said in self-defense. "And I am on Miss Ireland's list of girls pledged to an hour a day of real reading. I do try to 'keep up my education,' as Uncle Oliver calls it, spite of the distractions of this gay town."

My mother also spoke for me, with an air of pride. "Phœbe has a very good idea of organizing her time. She is reading Parkman." Cora did not look at her.

"I suppose you and Flo Fay are as thick as ever," said she. "She likes driving up to your gate in her pony-carriage. How do she and that stepmother get on now they've really got to live together? I'm sorry for them. I don't know which I'm sorriest for, now they've got past the polite stage."

My mother could not refuse to do her duty. "It is my belief," she said mildly, "that there is nowhere so much need of good manners and gentle speech as in everyday family life."

"Oh, you know what I mean," answered Cora, and turned to talk to me.

"Poor Cora!" my mother sighed, as our guest took her departure. "She cannot have a very happy home. I fancy her parents began their bickering by thinking it funny: they had been to the theatre a good deal. And now dispute seems to be the very breath of life to them."

"They think us dull folks. Tom as good

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as says they do. Now, mother, we must prepare to act!"

"Let him see a great deal of her?" she suggested.

"We can't send Tom to sea," said I regretfully.

"Shall we try a counter-attraction? Have n't you a classmate, Phœbe, that we could invite here for a visit? Or shall we try a masculine ally? Does Gilbert admire Cora?"

"Not he! But I should n't wish him mixed up in it. No, mother, I shall make a barbed wire fence of myself, that is what I shall do!"

My mother smiled. "I had n't noticed barbed wire in your disposition, dear."

"It's there," I said fiercely.

Tom and I had grown up such good comrades that it came naturally to us to play together still. A sister may be company in a mild form, but she has the advantage of being at hand. I was always

there to speak to, and always there to laugh with. Thus it happened that when college songs were sung around the Duffins' piano, I was by Tom's side, singing hard.

"Oh, the comfort of having an escort in the family!" I would cry, when a day's jaunt to the Wayside Inn was on foot. "The comfort of a brother!"

Tom grinned inscrutably. "Come on!" he said. "You are n't such bad company."

If we set forth to church, my father and mother would lead the family procession. I would bid Tom escort my grandmother, who begged to walk slowly; while I brought up the rear alone. With this formation, I was the only member of the party exposed to approach by a Duffin. It happened quite easily that Cora seldom saw Tom without seeing me, too. If he had been more ardent, he would probably have overcome so slight an obstacle as a sister, but Tom was a good deal of an

opportunist: he took the company that came in his way.

So I told my mother, for we held many conferences. "Tom is no judge of character," I said; "at any rate, of a girl's character. You never heard Tom analyze. We girls at college were forever analyzing."

"Sure it was n't gossip?" said my mother. "Yet your father says Tom understands the people at the wagon-shops. He says he is going to be a judge of men."

"He is n't, yet, of women. He has got to be protected from the Cora Duffins."

"She must know that the Callenders have little money."

"She likes Tom, — who would n't? He's handsome, for one thing."

His mother smiled proudly.

"One thing I am determined," said I:
"I am going to be always in the way, and
yet Tom will never suspect it. Mother, a
man's simplicity is perfectly refreshing,

is n't it? — after the awful sharpness of a girl. He will never know that I am acting as a non-conductor, will he?"

My mother smiled as she often had occasion to, at the wisdom of twenty-one.

The course I was bent on obliged me to see more of Cora than I liked. It did not suit my taste, this part I was playing. If bringing two people together who ought to meet is one of the most delightful of all offices, then keeping two people apart who ought not to meet is nothing less than an ugly job.

Yet a strange thing happened. "Pity and fairness" Florence and I, when freshmen, had chosen as a watchword from George Eliot, and "Pity and fairness" began now to do their work in my heart. As I came to know the Duffins better, I grew very sorry for them and for what they missed; for I had bred in me the belief that a family is a little society for the promotion of happiness. I confided to

Florence Fay, "The Duffins are like a realistic novel. I never believed there were such people."

"That is because you have had an ideal home. I have always told you so," said Florence wistfully.

"Of course we want to make each other happy: that is all there is to it. That is what a home is for. But Cora is afraid of her father and she snubs her mother,—what a way to live! Poor Mrs. Duffin must know all about that serpent's tooth that it tells of in 'King Lear.' I wonder if college mothers do often know what it is to have a 'thankless child.'"

"Are n't you getting very intimate with those people?" asked Florence doubtfully.

Not even to Florence Fay could I confide my anxiety for Tom. Much as I might pity our neighbors, I was unshaken in my resolve that my brother should be rescued from the Duffins old and young. He could

not know them as I did. Mr. Duffin treated him as a business man and an equal, consulted him gravely, and Tom came home and reported, "That old chap's got a head on him." Mrs. Duffin was all smiles and little pleasantries with Tom, and Cora met him with a laugh and a hail-fellowwell-met way of her own, that captured my father, too. We were all very jolly and friendly so long as Tom was present. I was touched when Mrs. Duffin confided to me, "You don't know the good it does Mr. D. and me to have all you young folks home from college"; while Mr. Duffin said to me, "I tell the madam she ought to have you over here more to sit down to meals, and get better acquainted, you and your brother."

I announced at home, "I never saw the Duffins seem so peaceful and happy as when they are listening to our noisiest college songs." It had not been our habit in times past to talk much about these neigh-

bors; since forbearance with the Duffins had long been a law of life with us, and silence was the safest form of forbearance.

In pursuance of my policy, I had a succession of visits from classmates, which was one of the fresh delights, I found, of being home from college.

"Tom," I said, "you have got to make yourself useful. How fortunate I am to offer the attraction of a brother!"

"Bring 'em on!" he said, beaming with hospitality.

"Phæbe's friends are such nice, wellbred girls, who know how to visit," said my mother.

"I find them very intelligent to talk with," said my father, "these girls just home from college. I always enjoy sitting down to the table with them."

"Sally Livermore is coming next week. You will have to like her, sir, or I will never forgive you. She is just as good as she is bright."

"Good to look at?" said Tom.

"Yes, if you really do look at her. She shows what she is, if you have any eyes. The rest of us think she is fascinating."

"I know that kind," said Tom, putting on wisdom; "but I like a girl with some looks."

I reported this speech to my mother. "What shall we do next? Sally Livermore is the very best thing I can think of; yet it is true, she is n't pretty till you know her. I am completely discouraged: propinquity is more than a match for us, mother."

THE BELLE OF THE HOME

A T about the age of twenty-one we begin to be aware of old friends, such as, all our lives, we have heard our elders talk of. It was soon after my return from college that my father, who was a trustee of the Old Ladies' Home, announced one day that he had received an application from a friend of Phæbe's.

"My friends ready for the Old Ladies' Home?" I laughed. "I must be getting on! Who can it be?"

"Mrs. Aspasia Weeks that was,—you have n't forgotten her? Mrs. Jonah Thompson is the name she goes by now."

"It is more than ten years since I have seen her," I said slowly, with a delightful sense of age and experience.

"I've known Mrs. Weeks these thirty

years," said my mother, outdoing me quite.
"I can't get used to her other name. I am glad that she is coming back to live among us. She has had her troubles, what with losing two husbands and two little children. Her second husband was a worthy man, but he does n't seem to have left much. But she is not one to bemoan her lot: I know her of old. I wish there were more of her disposition in the Home."

"I shall be there to meet her," I announced. "I want the fun of seeing if she recognizes me."

I was in high spirits at the mere thought of having grown up in Mrs. Weeks's absence. Twenty-one is, surely, an intoxicating blend of age and youth.

So it came about that on a bright summer day I put on my hat with roses, and set forth for the Old Ladies' Home. I had frequently left our garden flowers at the door on my mother's behalf, but I had been shy of venturing within. My grand-

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mother and mother seemed to have appropriated the old ladies, and it had not appeared that any one so young as I had any right to enter. I never passed the fine old house without admiring its Grecian columns, and wondering what Phidias would think if he could see the New England Parthenons.

Girlish egotism was strong in me, and presenting myself to a friend of my youth in my new character of young lady was, I doubt not, the thing that thrilled me most. Her astonishment and delight were all that I could have asked for. Mrs. Weeks herself had grown little and bent, but her eyes were keen and happy as ever. We fell instantly to fond reminiscences of the days when I was ten.

"Do you remember how you used to come and visit me regular on a Saturday morning, and how you used to bake cookies? And do you remember how scared you was of Jonah, when he come

courtin' me? — one of the best men that ever lived on earth. I wonder I forgive ve that!" Mrs. Weeks was all the time with her eyes upon me. "Yes, it's the same little Miss Phæbe Gav. I'd have known you anywhere."

"You have a grand room, Mrs. Weeks," I said, looking round the large front chamber. I discovered that, instead of commiserating her, I was to compliment and congratulate. "And such a view from your window," I continued; for green hills and the river made a charming picture.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Weeks, with satisfaction, "I can see every bit of the passing. That, I always say, is what you want of a window."

My old friend was wearing black calico in memory of her husband recently deceased, and I tried to say a word about the excellent Mr. Thompson. She gave me an account of his last illness, with

tears that ended in a courageous smile. "Yes, I've had most of the troubles and trials you can have," she said, "and yet I never could help comin' up cheerful. I guess I was born so, and don't deserve credit. I guess you was, too," she said, as I smiled back at her.

"I can't help it!" I cried. "'The world is so full of a number of things,'—that was my old birthday motto."

"I guess, little Miss Phœbe Gay, you're just about the same age you always was," said my old friend.

"Being with you, Mrs. Weeks, makes me ten again. I was a very serious person when I was about sixteen: I've been growing younger ever since."

"And yet you are so learned," said Mrs. Weeks-Thompson, looking at me.

"That is one of the family jokes. If you could hear the questions they ask me. It would take a college faculty to answer them."

"I 'xpect so," assented Mrs. Weeks. "I shall know where to go."

I was feeling the exhilaration of being studied and admired.

"I always said you ought to have an education when I see the way you went to work about anything. That's brains, I said, when I see you packing up dishes. She ought to make good use of 'em. What are you goin' to be?" said my old friend suddenly.

"I am not anything with a name to it, but indeed I am busy all day long."

Mrs. Weeks looked very doubtful about that. "Just devotin' yourself to lookin' pretty—that wa'n't just what I'd looked for in you."

I was quickly depressed under this disapproval, and found that I had not much to say for myself. I was making an idle morning call, my hands folded in my lap, in the very attitude deplored by Woman Militant. I said nothing to defend myself,

while Mrs. Weeks thought me over. "Well," she concluded, "I have my views, but I'll keep 'em to myself."

"Oh, don't, Mrs. Weeks-Thompson,— I'm going to call you in the fashionable way,—oh, don't," I begged of her.

"I'd expected to see your name in the papers, but I don't know now as I ever shall," said my old friend, prodding my ambitions.

"Oh, I am so sorry to disappoint you!" I put out my hand to her.

"Still, you're young yet. You may be leaving Still Waters. It's just the place for me to end my days, but then I've done my work. I've seen two husbands through, both sufferers."

"I hope you will be comfortable here, dear Mrs. Weeks," said I.

"Comfort ain't the word. Heaven 's the word."

"Have you got much acquainted yet?"
I asked cautiously.

"I know 'em all, and I feel as if I was the best off of the lot. It's everything to be spry and not flesh up. There are two or three so lame they can't hardly walk, and I've offered to be legs to 'em so far as I can."

"I wish you would introduce me," I said, summoning my courage. "Would they think I was intruding?"

"They'd love to see you. They all know your father. He's the financier; he's the treasurer. Did he tell you how one old lady wrote and asked him for a new black silk? Your father knows what it is to be tried."

That I was aware of. I said, "The next time I come, I want to get acquainted with the black silk lady."

"Come real often," said Mrs. Weeks, at parting. "I can't tell where the morning's gone to," which was due to her own gift for entertaining, so delightful to me when I was a child of ten. "Be sure you

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come soon; don't be formal." For the first time there was a pathetic look in her old face.

It brought me soon there again. "Now do talk and let me hear," she said. "I've been having a regular 'saylong' to-day, what with you and another caller, and several old friends inquiring after me. It does me good to have folks inquire, don't you ever fail to tell me," she said wistfully. I found her full of spirit, however. "They say the grasshopper is a burden when you get to be as old as I am. Now that grasshopper is what I'm bound to fight. Well, there's various ways of keepin' young, and one of 'em's readin' the 'Ladies' Own Journal.' I'm thankful I've got eyes enough left for that. It keeps you interested in 'most everything under the sun — and that's always been my way. Readin' the 'Ladies' Own' has made me think I'd have an afternoon tea, and invite the Home to meet Miss Phæbe Gay. There, now, what do you say to that?"

"What fun! And I'll help!"

"I brought my own things here," said Mrs. Weeks proudly. "I've more'n enough teaspoons, solid silver."

"I'll bring the little cakes, frosted ones, just the way I made them in old times."

"You won't need to fetch any teaspoons," Mrs. Weeks repeated, "but if you had any of those little openwork mats they've got the pictures of, to lay on the table."

"Yes, indeed, and we'll set out your table with the twisted legs, and have some flowers, and your pretty old tea-cups."

"And we'll have —" Mrs. Weeks went on and on, like a happy girl. Every detail she desired to have in accordance with the 'Ladies' Own,' which was considerably more fashionable in its requirements than was Still Waters society.

"Never mind," said my mother, watch-

ing my labors, "you could n't give more pleasure. It will make your old friend queen of society at the Home."

"I'm to 'pour,' "I laughed.

That fact was the reason that she accepted the invitation, the old lady of the black silk told me privately. "Naturally I wanted to honor the daughter of our treasurer," she said grandly; but she was rather stiff with her hostess, and refused most of her refreshments.

Four other old ladies sat around the tea-table.

"How will you have your tea, Mrs. Gatty?"

"Very weak, dear: I like to come a second time," Mrs. Gatty quavered.

"How shall I make yours, Mrs. Scatcherley?" I said loud and distinct, and was answered, "It don't make any kind of difference to me. Fix it any way you like. I was n't ever one of the fussy kind, to be so particular."

"And Miss Crewe?" I said to the little spinster on my left.

"No sugar for me. I know my mind on *most* subjects, but I don't call it fussy if I do." Her crispness was entirely goodnatured, and I liked her instantly.

"It always helps a cup o' tea," said Mrs. Weeks agreeably, "to have it passed to you by a smilin' young lady"— then what could I do but smile again! It is my belief she found this introduction among her "directions."

Grandma Whitaker had come in last, carefully led by the good nurse. I ran to one side of her, and we placed her at the tea-table.

"This is a great occasion for me," she said benignly. The other ladies at once looked younger when Grandma Whitaker appeared, for she had reached ninety and had lived twenty years in the Home. She was the star boarder, my father told us, and the trustees were justly proud of her.

"I have n't seen such an occasion since my ninetieth birthday. Was n't you here then? Why was n't you?"

"I was at college, or I should have loved to come."

"College, college, I've read in the papers about college."

One of the Home's proudest boasts was that Grandma Whitaker read the daily paper all the morning.

"I found her with it upside down," Miss Crewe whispered to me. "She's all but—" and she touched her own gray head significantly.

With the second round of tea, spirits rose, and voices, too.

"I don't deceive myself," said Miss Crewe. "I know I'm not so young as I was. But what I do say is that there's more to enjoy all along than young folks think."

She challenged me, and I laughed assent. Never would I let her catch me pitying her.

Miss Crewe's speech did the company good; they looked brightly at her and at me. I turned to give Mrs. Scatcherley a third cup of tea, for it was she I was sorriest for. She had a "son who might support her; his wife would n't have her. There's probably blame all round." Such was the brief formula of her story, as known in Still Waters; but to my imagination it held a world of family woe. While I gave Mrs. Scatcherley an extra lump of sugar, Miss Crewe went on with her speech. "We don't have to be every moment sighing and mourning for the old friends we've lost, - blessed be their memory; - we must make new friends every year: look at our new friend Mrs. Jonah Thompson now; and we must make young friends, like the daughter of our treasurer."

I seized my friend's hand and we bowed together. Mrs. Weeks-Thompson beamed with hospitality. When the party broke

up, it left the hostess, as all true parties should, in high content with herself and with her guests. Her pride was completed when she found her tea mentioned in the Still Waters weekly paper. I could not stop Tom, who furnished the item.

"Mrs. Weeks-Thompson," said I, "you are the belle of the Home."

"There might be two opinions as to which," she answered, looking at me affectionately. "Some might apply it elsewhere."

I shook my head. "Nobody but you yourself, Mrs. Weeks."

I tried to enlist Florence Fay's interest in the Home, after I became a regular visitor there; but Florence was shy and wondered how I could be at ease with people so "different."

"If you mean education," said I disjointedly, "there is Miss Crewe, who simply subsists on the public library. She is one of the most intelligent women in this town."

"I never could go and read aloud funny books to them the way you do, or play and sing,—I never could. What can I do? Something that takes money, I suppose," said Florence, a little bitterly. "I can't be riches, as Emerson says. It is only money the Fays are good for. Phæbe, I know you will laugh at me, but I want to give that old lady her black silk." And she did.

Florence was concerned for the æsthetics of the Home. Everything in Still Waters ought to be beautiful, she said, since nature made it so beautiful to begin with. "Do you think we could dare? Should we hurt anybody's feelings?"

"I would n't make it too æsthetic,—not in a William Morris way, Florence. The worst thing we could do for the Home would be to make it unhomelike."

"But a few good photographs, and some rugs, — the trustees would let me? Ask your father."

One day, as I entered the Home, the Irish maidservant met me with terror in her face. "Come, oh, come, miss! I'm afeard Mrs. Thompson's havin' a fit. She's all a-goin' with queer motions, and her head from side to side. I jist opened the door on her. Come up the stairs, quick, miss."

I rushed to my friend's bedroom, full of grief and solicitude. The door stood ajar; I gave a terrified knock, and a calm, familiar voice answered, "Come in, whoever you are."

There stood Mrs. Weeks-Thompson, with both hands clasped about the bedpost. She drew her arms up, then stretched them at length, then drew them up again, and at the same moment she rolled her head slowly from left to right, and back from right to left again.

"Why, why, what is the matter, dear Mrs. Weeks?" I cried in distress. "You must tell me what has happened to you. Try to tell me, dear Mrs. Weeks," said I, as soothingly as I knew how.

She stopped rotating her head, let go the bedpost, and sank into her rocking-chair. "I'm trying to get the better of my double-chin. I'm doin' just what they tell you in the 'Ladies' Own.' I'm limberin' my joints at the same time, two exercises at once, so as to save time. It's quite a new thing, you'll find, if you read about it. You see there's no gettin' out doors in such weather."

I thought instantly, "Florence can give a gymnasium to the Old Ladies' Home!" It turned out to be more a sun parlor than anything else, when Florence fitted it up in her own beautiful taste; but it certainly took its inception, as newspapers say, from that day when I discovered Mrs. Weeks engaged at her "exercises."

When I told at home the story of Mrs. Weeks-Thompson's "fit," my father said,

"Well, I had something myself to tell you about the good lady. I have just had a letter. A cousin of Mrs. Thompson up in the north part of the State has died and left her a house and money enough to live in it. She won't need to die in the Home."

Upon hearing this news, my mother thought well to call at once and congratulate our old friend, while she expressed our sincere regret at her leaving Still Waters a second time. She was much surprised at Mrs. Thompson's reception of her cousin's bequest.

"I don't wish to appear as if I was any ways ungrateful: that I want to say. But do you think I'd willin'ly go and live in a little story-'n-a-half house with no front porch after dwellin' behind them beautiful Greek 'n' Roman pillars all leavin' out at the top? And give up Still Waters society, where I am acquainted, to go 'way off up there north, where I don't know a

soul? I am going to stay right here the rest of my mortal life, but I am goin' to be a Boarder, and not an Inmate. I wish you'd do me the favor to tell Mr. Callender that, quick as you get home, he bein' the treasurer. I've told'em here already, that I am a Boarder, — the ones in charge, not the others. I would n't ever mention it to them."

"Mrs. Weeks is a lady, I'll say that for her!" cried Tom.

VII

THE STEPMOTHER OF FLORENCE

FLORENCE FAY and I read German regularly together on Saturday mornings,—one week at her house, the next week at ours. On a day in October we had settled ourselves and our books before the open fire in the library of the Fays. The door opened cautiously.

"Oh, I did n't know that you were here," said Mrs. Fay. "Don't let me disturb you, pray don't let me disturb you," and she disappeared.

"She would like to sit here," said Florence; "and it is her home, of course. I ought not to have closed the door. We can just as well go to my room for our German."

The library was consequently unoccupied all the morning. I passed the open

the stepmother of florence 105 door as I went away, and saw the dying and deserted fire. It gave me the queer, desolate feeling of a family that had fallen apart, and now sought only not to disturb one another.

There were often digressions from our German reading; and this morning, in a low voice, Florence had poured out her heart. "You see, my stepmother is always like that to me, and I am like that to her; nothing could exceed our politeness to each other."

"Do you really know each other?" I said, in a puzzled tone.

"No, and we are never likely to," she answered sadly.

"You have hardly had a chance. Since your father married, you have been at home so little," I thought aloud, as I could with Florence. "And now you are going away so soon."

"I know she wants me to go, — I can feel it all the time. That is the kind of

home I have, Phœbe Gay"; and she looked piteously around her richly furnished room.

"I think you ought not to give it up," said I; "I think you ought to study it out."

"You can't solve everything by just putting your mind to it: some things are just what they are, and they won't 'idealize' if you do bring a college education to bear on them."

She spoke again after we had been silent a little, both of us thinking. "Phœbe, I believe I will tell you: there is another reason why she would like a grown-up stepdaughter away from home this winter." She looked at me.

"Florence!" I looked at her.

"Yes, and I shall be more in the way than ever when a baby comes." Her lip quivered, and I seized her hand.

"But you dear girl, it is the best thing that ever happened, for every one of you." THE STEPMOTHER OF FLORENCE 107

"I 've always been an only child," she murmured unhappily.

How many times I had heard my mother make that excuse for her, though I could never see that Florence needed excuses.

"Dear, don't go away from home this winter. Now is your time to get acquainted with your stepmother, and to let her have a chance to know you. It does take time: it is worth spending time for."

Out of my own wealth of brothers and sisters, I had pitied Florence too much ever to talk about her loneliness. Now years of compassion for an only child broke forth; and I told her what she had missed, and what happiness was before her. We talked timidly and reverently of the "little sister."

"But such disparity in our ages," said Florence, with a whimsical smile.

"Not more than between my sister Lilian and me, — I am the youngest of nine. Lilian and I are the best pair of sisters!"

"It has kept you young, being the last one, Phœbe; it has made me old, to be the only one. I shall feel older than ever, lonelier than ever. My stepmother distrusts me,—she thinks I am criticizing her,—when I am just pitying her and myself, too. If I knew how to win her, if only I had 'ways.'"

"If you would only let other people know you as you let me," I answered. "If you could only make yourself more — more readable, dear."

"Father came often, you know, to see me at college, and she came once or twice with him. She was very respectful and polite about college, but begged that she might not meet the lady professors, declaring there was nobody she was so afraid of as a learned woman. She brought me fruit and flowers, for there is one thing she is determined: that is, to behave herself prettily to her husband's grown-up daughter. That is the deadlock. If we

THE STEPMOTHER OF FLORENCE 109 could quarrel, we could make up, and that might break the ice."

"Oh, can't you? Do try it!"

"She is dreadfully conscious of being a stepmother. I can see her thinking of it every time she looks at me. She never regards me in any other character than that of stepdaughter. She is only five years older than I am—poor thing! It is she who is lonely in Still Waters,—not I so much as she."

"Everybody has called on her," I said.

The new Mrs. Fay had for two years been an object of interest in the town, her dress and her beauty had been admired, and her city ways spoken of charitably.

"It must be a little hard for her to adapt herself to a country life," my mother had said kindly.

"What she needs is children," was my grandmother's frank opinion. "She suffers from idleness and restlessness. What

is the use of the handsomest house in town, if you are never at home in it?"

The tone of Still Waters by degrees became critical: "Always off somewhere, going South, or sailing for Europe. Rich folks don't know how to stay still in these days. You don't have 'em to depend on in the community as you used to."

Gradually the neighbors ceased to call on Mrs. Fay.

"Almost nobody comes to this house, except people from the city and you, Phæbe Gay," said my friend sadly.

Something must have happened before I saw Florence again, for she announced to me, "My stepmother has asked me to say 'Edith.'"

"Then, dear, don't ever call her stepmother again!" I had been brought up on the fairy story and the wicked stepmother.

"How did it happen, the 'Edith'?" I asked eagerly.

"She had been showing me things that she had ready for Little Sister, and before I knew it, I was crying and laughing and kissing her. Somehow it all ended with 'Edith,' I can't tell how. Phæbe, should you be willing to have her read German with us Saturdays? She needs things to do. Edith spent a year in Germany."

It worked very well, what with Mrs. Fay's respect for our knowledge of German books and our respect for her knowledge of Germany.

"And you help, Phœbe," said Florence when we were alone. "She likes me better because she sees you like me. She sees the real girl that I am when she sees me with you. That is what you do to people, Phœbe Gay."

I began to like Mrs. Fay on my own account. She had one of the best qualifications of stepmothers: she was ready to laugh. "And there is no way to get on so fast with people as to laugh and to cry

with them," Florence reflected. "What does talking amount to?"

I confess that I enjoyed the frivolous side of Mrs. Fay, and talked with her ardently about clothes and fashions. Florence never gave me satisfaction of this kind, for she said, "Let me have a thing rich and simple, and then let me wear it forever."

I discovered, on better acquaintance, that Mrs. Fay's frivolity lay on the surface of her character, and that beneath her New York exterior was a lovable, womanly woman. How else, I reasoned, would the wise and genial Mr. Fay have been likely to choose her for a wife?

Florence did not spend that winter with her New York cousins, but stayed in snow-bound Still Waters. Sometimes we persuaded her to go to parties, where she at once discovered the older members of the family, and attached herself to them for the evening. Never would she dance,

though her heart kept time to the music. She was the same wistful Florence Fay of the dancing-school, longing to be like other girls. "Still she suffers because she is an only child," said my mother. "If she could only make the best of her stepmother, Mrs. Fay might be like an elder sister to her."

Sometimes, in that winter, a quartette of Florence, Gilbert, Tom, and me went on pleasure bent to Boston. Then I tried to throw Tom and Florence together, that he might at least see the difference between her and Cora Duffin. I have not the slightest evidence that he did; but Tom was not given to making subtle comments upon anybody. Returning from a sleighride, he remarked that Florence looked healthy, and no more could I extract from him. It was indeed a wholesome, out-door winter for all of us. "Not a bad thing," said my father, "after the close confinement of college studies." Tom grinned.

"Mark my words, you will find this a year well spent. Cheeks rosy as sixteen, are n't they, mother?"

It did not matter much that when Little Sister came, she was a Boy. Florence was easily convinced that she needed a brother even more than a sister, since, had she not always Phæbe Gay?

With a son and heir to bear his name, maintain his family and fortune, no wonder Mr. Fay hummed the doxology up and down the house! Edith the mother was tranquil and worshipful, oblivious of New York and Europe. Mrs. Fay was reinstated in the favor of all Still Waters. "This will keep her at home," they said with approval. "She will take time now to get acquainted. She is dressy and stylish, but you can't always tell by that. No doubt she has a good heart."

"But don't you feel rather sorry for the grown-up daughter," said another, "now that this boy has come,—a boy growing up in the house, with all his noise?"

It was my mother who spoke and set this lady right.

In fact, only one person might have had a grudge against the baby, and that was I myself. Never had I known such a rival in Florence's affection. If a Little Sister had not arrived at Lilian's at nearly the same time with young Erastus, my case would have been harder.

Though myself neglected, I loved to see my friend so content. "It seems like home at last," said Florence, "and it had not, since my mother died. Edith was like city company. She was always arriving or departing. Now, I have actually heard her saying that Still Waters is the place of all others to bring up children. She talks of fresh country air and freedom and simplicity. Phæbe, I am glad I stayed at home this winter: I can see so much accomplished. You've got one of the best things done, Phæbe Gay, when you have learned to understand and love."

VIII

A YOUNG LADY

In Still Waters society an unmarried woman was a "young lady" until she tied her bonnet strings under her chin. Miss Gracia Garland had been a young lady as far back as I could remember her. She sat in the pew in front of the Callenders; but beyond admiring her Sunday hats, I had no acquaintance with her until the year I went to college. She would walk with me out of church, and question me about my plans. "I have always wanted to go myself," she confided to me; "I have always wanted an education. I wish I could go yet!" she said with fire.

I had up to that time taken Miss Gracia for granted, and shown no curiosity about her. She lived a little way out of town, and we seldom saw her except on Sundays. But after that speech, I had to know more of her history. I repeated what Miss Gracia had said.

"There has been a good deal, I fancy, that she couldn't have," my mother reflected. "Yet if she has n't had what she wanted, Gracia Garland is one to get pleasure out of the things she didn't want. She has that fortunate disposition. She has never seemed unhappy.

"The Garlands are people who keep very much to themselves," my mother went on. "They are people of small means, but refined and excellent people." To my youthful mind this was a colorless description: I could form little idea of the Garlands. "They have looked just the same for the last twenty-five years, the mother and the daughter and the two aunts,—the mother and aunts in their black lace shawls, and the girl with her pretty hair and her graceful hats."

"Do you call her a girl?" I asked with amusement.

"She is as slim and erect as you are.";

"Was she always young, or never young?"

My mother answered me thoughtfully. "Gracia Garland was brought up with older people. They have kept her feeling that she was a young person, especially the aunts. It is rather a way with aunts, sometimes rather a pleasant way."

She continued. "Gracia never found the right one," which was the delicate Still Waters way of saying that Miss Garland had not married.

This conversation had taken place four years before the summer of my return from college. On that first Sunday after Commencement, a company of Callenders filled our pew; but in front of us Miss Gracia Garland sat alone. My mother whispered to me, "All are gone in the last three years."

Miss Gracia turned to us at the end of the service, and smiled softly upon me. "How is your dear grandmother? She is n't able to be out to-day?" She spoke so tenderly that my mother told me, as we walked away, "You know she lost her own mother only this spring."

"And is she alone in her home, too?" I asked.

"Yes. After giving her life to keeping others from being lonely, her turn has come. I am glad you are to be at home, Phæbe. You will cheer her, I am sure."

During those four years Miss Gracia and I had indeed established a rather odd relation; it was as if she, at this late hour, were going to college by proxy. She followed my studies with an eager sympathy and enthusiasm that gave the final touch to my happiness as a college girl.

Miss Gracia, however, was by no means a woman without education. "Culture" I soon perceived she had, and I pondered upon the difference between Culture and Education, and I am pondering still. At that period it appeared to me to mean a familiarity with the Italian Renaissance as distinguished from a knowledge of logarithms.

With my mother's words in mind, I said to Florence Fay, "Let us drive out to Miss Gracia Garland's this afternoon, and not leave it till next week or next summer. Father will let me have the buggy."

Now that I had ended my romantic life in the ideal world of college, and had come home to plain living, I was prepared to find Miss Gracia less interested in me; but I was, on my side, moved by her loneliness to seek her more than ever.

We alighted at her front gate, tied the horse to a white hitching-post, and walked up the path between the flower-beds.

"There is a house I could live in and

be happy!" exclaimed Florence ardently; and repeated it as she glanced about the charming old parlor.

There were faithful inquiries for the many Callenders before we settled to conversation. There was no one of Miss Gracia's to inquire for,—no one but the cat and the boarder.

"Phæbe, I have never heard enough about your last summer in Europe." This was not mere politeness on Miss Gracia's part, for we discovered that she yearned for Europe quite as much as she longed for college. "I don't expect to see it with my own eyes," she said quite cheerfully, "but I have letters from friends who travel, and they are a great deal to me. Then if you have library books and a stereoscope, you almost feel as if you had been there. Did you ever see my views? Though you have both seen the real places," she said with a deference we knew we did n't deserve.

We took the little hand stereoscope and placed the small double photographs in the frame, and cried out with delight as we recognized one scene after another.

"I go over them of a winter evening," said Miss Gracia contentedly. "I say to myself, I'll spend my evening in Italy."

"Oh, you ought to go!" I burst forth injudiciously.

"They tell me I ought to have a change, but I love my home," she said defensively.

"It's perfectly charming,"—we both spoke quickly,—"the dearest old house!"

"No," she said quietly, "I could never think of going to Europe. Come and talk to me about it, that is all I will ask. You are just the ones to enjoy that article on Oxford in the last 'Littell,'—a friend sends me 'Littell.'"

"Ah, Oxford!" we sighed ecstatically.
"You must take that home with you

and read it together. Since Miss Horatia Budd founded the library, it has made all the difference in the world. So many books of travel I've read aloud to dear mother."

We left Miss Gracia to her old mirrors and slender mahogany, her prairie roses and foreign photographs, and of course talked her over as we drove home. Some of our remarks were these: "There ought to be a Fund," said Florence, "for sending people to Europe who can't go. Put a tax on those who go and don't deserve to."

"Oh," I said vehemently, "why don't some of those rich friends who write her tantalizing letters from Rome and Venice just *take* her?"

"She ought to marry some rich, refined, cultivated, perfectly lovely man."

"You always solve difficulties by marrying people off, Florence. Can't we get her to Europe in any other way? She would n't

like any man that I know. You can't count on matrimony for Miss Gracia. She does n't enjoy men's ways — she simply does n't like them around. She would rather have books and flowers and colonial bureaus. She said to my mother, 'There is more comfort than you would think in not having a man in the house.' When a woman has come to that!"

No; Miss Gracia was not a person to be disposed of in this way. She once confided to me in language so delicate that my words do it violence, the occasion when she had come nearest to a proposal. An excellent widower had told her that had he intended to marry again, she would have been the woman of his choice; and had added quickly that he was quite without such intention. You should have seen Miss Gracia's glee and my wrath.

We still considered our problem of Miss Gracia and a journey to Europe. "How I should love to do it!" said my friend.

"Father would give me the few hundred dollars, but she is just the person you can't do such things for. She has the pride of old mahogany. No, I don't dare."

"I will tell you who really owe her something," said I, with energy. "Since before I was born, she has been teaching a Sunday-school class of wriggling, squirming boys and turning most of them out fine men. Why don't her former pupils send her to Europe? Tom and Gilbert might start it. She always seemed as fond of boys as she was shy of men."

"I don't believe she would like it," Florence pondered. "She would know that they had to be *asked*."

"I am almost afraid to have her go. She might be disillusioned. Perhaps she'd better keep her dream."

"That little hand stereoscope as a substitute for Europe,—it almost makes me cry. They don't *know* over there! You have to be an American!"

"I'd far rather live in America," I said stoutly, "and keep Europe to go to."

We spoke of Miss Garland at our supper-table.

"I am afraid her taxes are a burden," said my father. "She owns a good deal of rocky pasture land that don't earn its keep. But land is coming up at that end of the town."

It took me not long to settle in my mind that a slice of Miss Gracia's pasture should send her to Europe, even if we never picked blueberries there again. That was about all the use that it had served lately, for few cattle were so reduced in circumstances as to feed on that lean pasturage. I had a business-like imagination, and had laid out Miss Gracia's estate in building-lots before I slept.

Florence and I discussed possible buyers. The only one she could suggest was her father; the only one I thought of was Mr. Christopher Sadler. There were objections to our urging the purchase upon either of these generous people. I fell back upon my grandmother's maxim, the hardest for youth to accept: "Things work out, only give them time."

Meanwhile, my friendship with Miss Gracia ripened. She was touchingly grateful for companionship; I felt myself much overrated when she thanked me for my visits. It was certainly extravagant of Miss Gracia to talk of freshness and brightness when it was only a matter of a pink gingham gown, and looking intelligent while I listened. She knew how to make the most of people; I am sure she made the most of me. I always went away from her feeling somebody much better than my ordinary self. That exalted, treading-on-air sensation we college girls knew who had been pupils of Miss Ireland.

I, for my part, found Miss Gracia de-

lightful company. She was "full of ideas," thought out in long, peaceful hours of sewing and gardening, and fed by generous reading. As she set stitches, she talked of the wide world, and I broke in with, "Miss Gracia, your mind has traveled the world over, if you have n't. Half the people with tickets a yard long just travel with their bodies." Her expression changed to what we called her "European look," a distant look of yearning and renunciation. I could not bear it and changed the subject. I told her that Florence Fay had been placed on the Library Committee, at the suggestion of Miss Horatia Budd, the donor of the building. She had refused to serve herself, on the ground that "it was more than it was wuth to dress up and go to meetings."

"Why are you not on the Committee?" asked Miss Gracia jealously. She had a notion that I was not taken seriously enough by my townspeople.

Months passed, but Europe seemed no nearer for Miss Gracia. Then things happened quickly. A letter from Cousin Anne Dudley announced that she would visit us, and stated mysteriously that she had important business in Still Waters. On the first evening of her arrival, she told us quite formally of a decision she had reached.

"My dear cousins," she began, "I suppose you scarcely realize what a large place you fill in my life, especially now that my dear husband is gone. You, Aunt Wise, and you, Cousin Sophie, and my little Phæbe Gay. I need you all, and I need men like you, Cousin James, and like you, Tom, to help me in my affairs. There are no other people so dear to me. I have decided to leave my large New York house, where there are no children or grandchildren ever to come to me, and, if I can find the right site for it, I am going to build as beautiful a home as I can

make, here in your town of Still Waters. I wish to buy a rather large tract of land, which shall command a wide view, with some water in the landscape."

"I know a piece—" my father started to say.

"You might buy—" said my mother at the same instant.

"Oh, buy Miss Gracia Garland's pasture!" I panted, ahead of them all.

"I shall await your advice," replied Cousin Anne.

"It will be the crowning blessing of my days, if you come here to live, my beloved niece," said my grandmother, with trembling voice.

"If I find a beautiful situation, I have friends who would like to be my neighbors in summer. You know the Warings—Charlotte Waring and her husband. I told you once their rather romantic history."

"You always were the good fairy,

Cousin Anne. You little know what you have done this time. That is, if you only like Miss Gracia's berry pasture," I added, for safety.

Cousin Anne did not fail me. She was delighted with the lovely outlook from those stony acres; she summoned her New York Warings and together they purchased the entire hillside.

"Now, Miss Gracia!" and I threw my arms about her neck; "now let's go to the steamer offices to-morrow!"

This was not Miss Gracia's "way," however: she wished to sip the sweets of anticipation; to know for three months that she was "going to sail," and to tell the date to her acquaintance. She wished to collect guidebooks and addresses, and to search the travel shelves of the public library, so as to whet her appetite. By good fortune, there was a congenial cousin, who said she had been waiting years for Gracia to be free to go.

And so at last, one day in June, I went with Florence Fay to Boston to see the two ladies sail. When the gangplank was lifted, and Miss Gracia was committed to her Paradise, we girls looked into each other's faces, but we could not speak.

A MINOR POET

I'm was at an evening reception in Boston that I renewed my acquaintance with Mr. Eliphalet Locker. I had known him when I was sixteen; but now, a full-fledged young lady with a small train to her gown, I felt myself a quite different character.

Mr. Locker was a most modest author, with an engaging sense of his own unimportance. That persons should wish to "meet" him never, I am sure, occurred to him; and truly enough, as a dissatisfied hostess said, "he was not much to meet." He was entirely unreliable as a talker. In fact, he never perceived that it was his business to make an impression consistent with his writings.

Our hostess said, "Mr. Locker, you and your young townswoman should know each other. Miss Callender is a senior at college, and they *all* read your poetry." Mr. Locker ignored this extravagant compliment, and so did I. "Oh, Phæbe Gay? Is this Phæbe Gay grown up?" was what he said. We began to talk about my grandmother.

The next year we came home from college, and at the beginning of the summer, Florence Fay announced, "Your Mr. Locker is going to be at the old farm with his sister."

"Our Mr. Locker," I corrected her. "We discovered him together. That was years ago, when we got him written up, and some attention paid his poems. We never could have done it if Gilbert Thorne had not helped us. He says Mr. Locker writes some first-rate stuff, and I think a good deal of Gilbert's opinion."

"I know you do; I have observed that.

Yet Mr. Locker is only a minor poet," Florence continued thoughtfully. "But even then, he is worlds away from common people. A minor poet sees more and feels more and thinks more and lives more than a quarter of a million ordinary people,—and some of it he gets expressed, and then it's rapture!"

"Mr. Locker writes prose, too," I added, bringing her back to earth, "and I think it is better writing than his poetry. Gilbert Thorne says it is. Funny! Mr. Locker is the shyest, most reserved man, and yet when he writes an essay, he simply tells you his whole heart. I know Mr. Locker, but it is n't by standing and talking with him at a reception."

"Ah," said Florence, "that is the artist and the poet: what he could never tell his own family, he can proclaim to his dear public. Mr. Locker very nearly tells his early love affairs in his essays."

Later in the summer we were again

talking of our minor poet. "Did you see that lovely thing of his, 'Europe Unvisited'? I believe that you had told him about Miss Gracia Garland."

"Several times he has done that," I said proudly. "He listens, as if he had forgotten you were there, and as if he did n't hear a word you were saying, and then, by and by, — the poem!"

"Forgot you were there? Not he! He told me, Phœbe Gay, that you were air and sunshine to his mind. Was n't it you that made him write his finest poem, I think, 'The Workman on the Pyramids'?"

"I was only saying to him that I had often thought of the people way back in the past who had had great experiences and could not *tell*. Their dumbness is so pathetic, just as the dumbness of animals is almost tragic to me sometimes."

"The poet is for that," said Florence. "He can tell; he does n't have to have the

experience. If he has suffered, he has the key. Every poet has suffered."

"I like to talk with him about history," said I; "he seems to realize it so."

"Imagination!" Her face was all alight with the lovely word. Who could pronounce it as she did?—"Did Miss Gracia see 'Europe Unvisited,' tell me, Phœbe."

"She said that poem made her feel as if she could stay at home and live with the vision."

"How those two would appreciate each other! Oh, could n't we bring it about?"

Like Emma, my favorite heroine of Jane Austen, I, too, was much inclined to the managing of other people's happiness. Florence and I particularly enjoyed each other's society when we were acting as fellow conspirators. We had done so at sixteen, and we were doing it still. We had, however, no great success as match-

makers. With our best efforts, we could only get Miss Gracia to say, "It is rather disappointing, meeting authors. I believe I would rather think of them as disembodied spirits." And when I sang Miss Gracia's praises, Mr. Locker, I found, had confused her with a lady of the same stature.

Meanwhile, as we neared the end of the summer, we saw more and more of our poet. My mother was one of the few people who set him at his ease, and he was always happy talking with my grandmother. Like my uncle, he took a lively interest in my education. He lent me books and I read them to please him. He talked to me on subjects just beyond me, flattering me and stimulating me. He found out the gaps in my education, and taught me many things that for want of a better word may be called "post-graduate." Between Uncle Oliver, with his "satiric touch," and Mr. Locker, leading me along the pleasant paths of Boston culture, I fancy I was very well instructed in that first year out of college.

I saved my brightest thoughts to tell my friend, for nobody met them with quite the look that he did. I can see the keen American eyes and humorous mouth of Mr. Locker become regretful and tender as his face settled in silence. Knowing an old Still Waters story, I thought I understood. If he gave me a poem to read, I transferred it to his lost love, and read her into it, admiring his loyalty to her memory. Florence and I decided that we must give up our hopes for Miss Gracia.

Quite irrelevantly, I thought, my friend about this time began to disparage Mr. Locker. I could usually tell what turn her thoughts were taking, without any use of conjunctions; but now I did not follow her. I could only look surprised and inquiring.

When our minor poet returned to the city for the winter, he sent me his latest

book, and I must needs write at once to acknowledge it. He had to thank me for the "fresh breeze" of my letter, and a pathetic undertone made me write him another. I took great pains with these little notes. As I was writing to a man of letters, I tried to be literary and say things with an air, a fashion that never became me. As for those he wrote me, you could almost have taken one for a letter of Charles Lamb, - and what more can one say for a letter? All the fun that would not do for poetry, and was too shy for society, came out in these close-written pages. Ah, why, one day, did I destroy them! Youth is short-sighted, and does not know how kindly Memory deals with us at last.

My mother spoke to me playfully one day, and yet a little anxiously: "My dear Phœbe, are n't these letters rather frequent?"

"It is because Mr. Locker does n't stay

answered," I laughed lightly. "He writes the same day sometimes."

"A man's businesslike habit of replying at once," my mother commented.

I laughed again.

"Such a friendship has its practical value as a formative influence," she said in her most common-sense tones. "I can see that it stimulates your mind and gives you wider interests. Young girls do well to have some acquaintance with older people and with superior people."

I did not quite fancy my mother's calculating in this cool fashion the profits of my friendship with Mr. Locker; but I was almost angry when she said prosaically, "Is n't he a little inclined to be sentimental? I am glad you are not of that sort. Don't let the poor man think you are in love with him."

"The idea, mother!"

"In these friendships one is sometimes hurt."

"As if you could n't have a quiet, comfortable friendship with a person two or three times as old as you are," I said hotly.

"I have great regard for Mr. Locker," said my mother gently. "His writings reveal a beautiful nature."

"I am proud that I have any pretensions to friendship with such a man," said I ardently. "That he should think me worth spending time upon, — mother, it makes me hold my head higher!"

My mother did the wisest thing, and said no more.

Gilbert Thorne and his cousin the Boston journalist were great friends with Mr. Locker. "We clamber up to his study," said Gilbert. "He lives up at the top of a house on the Hill. He's never had much money, but he's always managed to have books; they are even piled up on the floor. There are photographs and engravings all about, and there's color of the right sort.

The general effect is good, as if he enjoyed himself. Ernest and I like to drop in and see what the old fellow is up to."

"What is he up to?" I asked.

"He ought to write more. Locker potters over his writing. He quotes Flaubert, 'Prose is never done'; much less poetry, he says. He's got notebooks to fill a"—Gilbert waved his hand towards the ceiling. "Knows'em apart, too. They'll be good for his biographer."

"Mr. Locker told me that he didn't need much money," I said; "that he had enough to write as he pleased."

"He is more likely to last that way. Locker'll be in the anthologies; one or two of his poems will. Did you see 'Europe Unvisited'? I'd give a good deal if I could get off a poem like that. He told my cousin you gave him the idea. See here, Phæbe, are you and old Locker getting to be such pals? He's a romantic old chap. He talks to us young fellows about

Woman in the old-fashioned way—we like to hear him go on. He's got a halo about your heads — you've got to live up to it!"

"That's like Ruskin," I murmured.

"He's been making you read Ruskin, I'll bet."

I nodded.

"Look here, Phæbe, I'll give you some advice about reading: you come to me. I'm more up to date than Locker."

"Gilbert," said I, turning a sharp corner, "have you heard from Mr. Christopher Sadler lately?"

One winter day, Mr. Locker took me to see some pictures in Boston, and because I was a little late to supper, all the family had remarks to make. Tom's shall not be repeated.

I very nearly shed tears as I said, "I think it is hard if a sensible girl and a sensible middle-aged man can't have a sensible friendship without being persecuted!"

"They can't," said Tom.

"Sit down, sister, and have some cold tongue," my father interposed.

"Tom shall be quiet," said my mother. "Tom, eat your supper."

That had been a joyous afternoon among the pictures, and yet a vague uneasiness had haunted me. I was long in getting to sleep. The last thing I remembered was Tom's provoking voice, 'They can't."

A number of days passed, and I heard nothing from Mr. Locker. Then a book came, of which he had spoken, but no letter. When I wrote a word of thanks, there was for many days no response. At last came a letter, never to be forgotten, He asked me to forgive him if for a time he did not see me or write to me. I must go my way untroubled. The letter was sweet and calm and reasonable, until it reached the end. That was a cry.

When my mother wondered why the family saw nothing of our old friend, I tried to answer, but cried upon her shoulder.

"Don't try to talk about it, dear. Such things will happen. But you are both such sensible people that you will not let your friendship be spoiled."

"Oh, mother, don't call me 'sensible': it sounds as if I hadn't any heart! Sometimes I think I haven't."

"All in good time," said my mother, and in her face was the look of relief that I had once before seen there. "You are mine still, my little girl."

THE CALLENDERS AT HOME

THE CALLENDERS were at home because of my father's attack of rheumatism, which made a sad chapter in our winter. He bore his pain with more patience and cheerfulness than we did. He begged us not to be so compassionate,—only give him our society.

The Callenders at home seemed never quite so much at home as in the evening. My father would repeat his lines from Cowper:—

"Now stir the fire, and close the shutters fast,
Let fall the curtains, wheel the sofa round,
And while the bubbling and loud hissing urn
Throws up a steamy column, and the cups,
That cheer but not inebriate, wait on each,
So let us welcome peaceful evening in."

If a winter storm were raging without,

so much the better. "All home and under one roof," my grandmother would say; "the Lord have pity on lone folk and sorrowful," and my mother's face would grow compassionate. But to me, in my youth, the wailing of the wind in the chimney or the far-off wailing of the world only made our own fireside the more secure and cheerful. Our friendly sittingroom was Home, the very heart of it. Yet I have sometimes thought that wherever my mother set down her work-basket, -given her by her little children on a Christmas long ago, — around that workbasket was Home. Not far from her would be my father, whenever he was in the house. Newspaper in hand, he would read aloud local items, or try faithfully to interest her in the political situation while she as faithfully darned the heel of his stocking. He was an ardent Republican at the breakfast-table and in his loyalty to his party newspaper, but he was of too

retiring disposition to take part in public life. My father loved not only his lively newspaper but his quiet book: "I'm sorry for the people who think it hardly decent to say out loud they love poetry." And saying that would set him off upon "Tintern Abbey," or the great "Ode."

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her,"

he would repeat with reverent fervor.

The same firm association of ideas that knit together Poetry and Wordsworth characterized my father's mind. Topics are recurrent in family life and so are anecdotes; but if her husband told his stories many times over, it only proved, said my mother, the sure-footedness of the masculine intellect.

My father read history with almost as much animation as he did his newspaper; and also fiction of a temperate sort—novels that "cheer but not inebriate." Having quoted the lines from Cowper,

"Let Phœbe read aloud to us," he said.
"Last winter—four winters—we did n't hear her voice."

"Read Dickens — read 'Pickwick,'" Tom proposed. "That's good for rheumatism."

"I thought we were going to have 'Twelfth Night,' since you children went to see it last week."

"You bet we did!" cried Tom. "It was great. I never believed Shakespeare could write as good a play as that! I had to read a pile of 'em in college."

"Grandma, shall it be 'Twelfth Night' or Dickens?"

"'Pickwick," said my grandmother, without wasting words.

"Though 'Twelfth Night's 'pretty fair," Tom added, on behalf of Shakespeare.

Nora was putting away dishes in the next room, and drawn by the laughter, paused with a platter in each hand.

"Nora, sit down and listen," said my

mother, and Nora dropped into a chair just within the dining-room door and out of our sight.

In these days of the passing of the Irish servant, I like to remember Nora. Strange accents are heard in our kitchens, and her fine old brogue is almost gone. My grandmother and she had many wit combats. Each gave the other a good character: "The old lady's got sinse; she besn't always pokin' her head in the kitchen." This was accompanied by reminiscences of the mother-in-law at her last place of service: "there'll be manny a dry cheek at her funeral." And my grandmother praised Nora: "She's not one of these girls with head full of beaux. Do you hold on to her, Sophie."

Nora's laugh from behind the diningroom door gave the final touch to "Pickwick." My grandmother wiped her eyes, and declared she must rest and take breath.

She drew forth a box from her black satin bag, and offered us Oldport gibraltars, fresh and creamy and meit-in-yourmouth. "There, you'll be glad I went to visit my friend Betsey Plummer in Oldport."

All but my father partook.

"Give us another," said Tom. "Then drive ahead with 'Pickwick,' Phœbe."

My father's illness brought many sympathetic callers, and to-night arrived the minister and his wife. After careful inquiries for the invalid, Mr. Rumsey turned to me. The minister would both please me and tease me by repeating from Scripture, "I commend unto you Phæbe our sister, — for she hath been a succorer of many, and of myself also."

"Phæbe has always been a favorite of the minister and his wife," my mother would say afterwards with pleasure.

"Oh, don't you know the reason why?" I would answer. "It is because I am just

the age of their little girl that died. Oh, you do remember, mother?"

Mr. Rumsey on this occasion went on to compare me to that Phæbe who, it is said, bore to Rome St. Paul's famous letter.

"No, no," my grandmother interposed. "We must not praise young folks too much. They've a great deal to learn, a great deal to learn. Phæbe Gay, though, I will say, is a thoughtful granddaughter."

"There you are, praising her yourself," said Tom. "What about me?"

"You don't appear to need it, sir; you think very well of yourself without," answered our grandmother with spirit.

The conversation became general, and all but my father took a hand in discussing the public duties of women, in the '70's a fresher subject than at present. My grandmother held that before we were admitted to public life, we should have passed an examination in domestic duties and relations.

"But, madam, a well-organized woman, one who manages her time well, has a certain margin. Look at my wife: she has many public duties. A minister's wife tried the experiment long since."

There was a wistful look in Mrs. Rumsey's sweet face; for, as we all knew, there would not have been such "margin" in her life if the little daughter had not been taken from her.

Tom had buried himself in Dickens, regardless of callers; I gave myself up to listening, for at this period there was nothing I so dearly loved to hear about as the sphere of woman. My father was growing restive, and I felt sure he was suffering more than he admitted. With a frown of pain, followed by a smile, he began, "Now if I were to sum up this interesting discussion,"—

Mrs. Rumsey looked closely at him and at once persuaded her husband to say good night.

Family visitors were indefatigable in their attentions to my father. My sister Lilian came every day, with two or three children in her train, Alec and Rose and Jamie. She frequently left a bunch of them with "Aunt Phœbe"; for one of my most important minor characters was that of aunt.

Lilian expressed herself with considerable elegance on the benefit of educated aunts. "I don't want to use you merely as a nursery governess, Phæbe, but I want you to give the children all you can of your society." Who would refuse, after that, to take them off her hands for an afternoon? When Rose rebelled against reading her lesson to her great-grandmother, on the ground that the dear lady had not been to college, I do believe my grandmother was a little piqued.

"How have they behaved?" asked Lilian at the end of a strenuous day. "How has Alec?"

"Behaved like a little minister," said my grandmother.

"And Rose?"

"Not so much can be said for her. Phæbe has kept her out of doors, for fear of disturbing your father. Rose is n't so respectful as she might be, I am sorry to tell you; and a noisy child, I call her."

Callenders far and wide came to inquire for my father. Uncle Oliver and Aunt Alice spent the afternoon, and were extremely lively and entertaining. As the patient appeared to be better after their visit, Tom took the opportunity to talk business until bedtime. My father did not sleep that night, and next day his son-in-law, the doctor, was summoned. Roger Waite left the house silent and serious, and by and by returned with another physician.

Dark days followed. The house was quiet with a stillness it had never known before, that noisy, merry home of ours. My mother and I moved softly about,

while Tom tiptoed and gesticulated in frantic efforts to make no noise.

I sat by my father, my heart aching with a new, strange fear. Not a day but he smiled on me: "It's good to have Phæbe home, don't you say so, mother? What was that Bible quotation of the minister's?"

"I could n't do without Phæbe now," my mother answered.

"Cheerly, cheerly," he would say; "the old ship has n't foundered vet."

My mother would repeat her hopeful "It is only rest he needs. Your father has worked too hard."

In spite of our cheerful words, it was near the end of February before we took courage. Then, one sunny day, our patient asked with decision to have a window opened wide. "Ah, I smell the earth! I knew by the look of the sunshine that this was the promise of spring. Phæbe, call your mother: I hear a robin!"

That afternoon, my father came downstairs for the first time, and sat in the sunshine at the west window, with the daffodils beside him that Florence Fay had brought that morning. My mother and I hovered about him full of joy.

"'For lo, the winter is past,'" he repeated; "'the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come.' And my dear wife and daughter, I am a well man!"

UNDERSTUDY

TOM," said I, the day Roger Waite paid his last professional visit and "dismissed the case," "Tom, our father and mother ought to have a vacation; he ought to have one from the Wagoners, and she ought to have one from us and from all her good works. Everybody is wanting her for something at this season, and she is tired out with father's illness. He is nearly well, and it is the very time for both of them."

"California is the place: father don't want picture galleries. Let's see how we could finance it."

"Just take some money and go, and not mind 'the children's future' that they are always thinking about. We can take care of ourselves, sir!"

Tom wagged his head thoughtfully. "We could fix it."

"It's their turn," I pleaded. "They've got every last one of us educated, and now they ought to have some fun. I'll be understudy for mother, and you be understudy for father. We'll sit at the head and the foot of the table, Tom. I'll criticize your carving."

"No, sir. It's only a man's wife can do that; I'm not going to have that kind of a wife, either."

"Let's propose it to them at dinner. Tell grandma, so she can be ready to answer objections."

"Tell 'em we'll run the old place. They'll never be missed," said Tom. He was the same Tom who had conspired with me when I was ten, even to the lock of hair on the crown of his head, that would not down for any hairbrush. "Let's give it to 'em strong. Tell 'em they'll live longer, and all that."

My mother began, "But how am I to desert the Ladies' Aid in the middle of the year, and I the treasurer?"

"Let them make me treasurer. We are known to be an honest family. Look at father, treasurer of the Home. Hand over your funds to me, both of you!"

"But clothes for such a journey?"

"Did n't father have a new coat for my graduation, and did n't you have your black lace gown made over? You are all right for the gay hotels; and your regular clothes are the ones to travel in. Don't let us hear dress as an excuse, in a family of sense!"

I did, however, cast a thought over my mother's wardrobe. Her clothes, like herself, grew old gracefully; and some, that dated ten years back, became her best. Nevertheless, one new gown must be achieved, and I began to study upon style and material.

"I suppose I shall have to buy a new

hat," — a thing my father always did reluctantly. It took family firmness to persuade him.

"You certainly will, Father Callender," said I.

"But how am I to leave grandma?"

My grandmother spoke for herself. "Why have you brought up Phæbe to be a reliable child, unless you get some good of her? I trust myself to Phæbe, though I don't understand this new word of hers."

"Understudy. It's a theatre word, grandma."

"I've never had aught to do with theatres; but I can see that you mean a substitute. And your brother Tom is perfectly capable of taking care of the furnace."

"I should hope so, and a great deal besides, at twenty-three. He will take care of us all!"

"What will Nora say?" asked my mother.

"She will be delighted; two less plates to wash," said I, hard-heartedly.

"She has n't seemed quite herself lately. I asked her what was the matter, and she said, 'I dunno rightly what is it ails me, but I be sighin' all the time.'"

"I shall send her away for a few days when the family is only three," I said, enjoying my authority.

"Nora," my mother asked, "what do you think of a journey to California for Mr. Callender and me?"

"Ye'll niver come back. We'll niver see ye again," Nora answered, in her Irish minor. It struck a chill to my heart.

"Oh, Tom, why did we urge it?" I said, for one instant. "They are too precious."

"I am not so concerned about clothes," my father meditated. "I am thinking how I am to leave my business. I have been away six weeks already."

"I will help with the wagons," I cried.

"I have a hereditary taste for wagons, as well as Tom."

"It strikes me you are cutting out a good deal of work for yourself, young lady."

"I'm wild to work, if only you two people will go! When have you had a journey together, I should like to know?"

"Hardly since we went to Niagara Falls on our wedding journey. We have been very contented at home."

"Well, the next time it will be Europe," I said threateningly.

I regard as the great achievement of my first year out of college the visit of my parents to California. But as this is a record of my adventures and not theirs, I will omit their experiences and relate only what happened at home.

I first dispatched Nora to a cousin's for a short visit, and when she came back, rosy and radiant, she informed me that she was engaged to be married. Nora had been with us twelve years, and her scorn of men had given us a false security. There is a sense of stability in one's housekeeping, said my mother, when you have no visitors in the kitchen. Had not duty compelled the milkman to call daily, Nora's heart would probably have remained ours. "A sinsible man," was the character she gave him, when I inquired into his deserts, "a varry sinsible man," with not another word.

I handled the situation as well as I knew how, put it to Nora that it would be honorable for her to stay till my mother's return. My grandmother refused to believe the news: "Wait till your mother comes home; she will know how to deal with her."

"I am not telling mother yet that you are going to leave us, Nora."

"I'll be disthresst with leavin' yer mother, blessed saint that she is already, without waitin' to die for it. She was the wan to encourage yees always, an' that's what a gurrul wants, — always with such a cheerful voice on her. Yis, an' I've seen you growin' all the way up from so high, Miss Phæbe. Do you mind the time you stayed in bed all of wan day, not to be sint to school? It's you will be gettin' marrit next. I've seen two weddin's of your sisters in this house, all in the parlor bay window, on the very same spot o' carpet."

"One is needed at home," said I.

"Your mother's not the kind to keep ye,—not the way they kept Miss Gracia Garland. So the neighbors was sayin' when she'd seen 'em all to the grave. I be feared o' loneliness like hers. Don't you be copyin' after her."

As my mother's understudy, multifarious duties fell to me. Remote relatives descended upon us, Still Waters being a convenient distance from Boston. The visit, however, was such a success that we

liked each other better at the close than at the beginning,—which I take to be the chief end of visits. I engaged to spend a fortnight with these cousins in the Middle West as soon as I had leisure. They were grieved to miss my mother; but as they were sight-seeing in Boston all day, and nodded in their chairs till it was nine o'clock and a decent bedtime, it was quite as well that she was in the Yosemite.

I brought my grandmother through a cold without its turning into pneumonia,—that I was proud of; and I played checkers with her every evening but Saturday and Sunday. "To-morrow night," she would say regularly, "I shall have you go out with your brother. You are not to forfeit all your winter pleasures."

"Grandma," said I, "I want your advice. Still Waters would be shocked — would be simply paralyzed — would n't it, if we were to have a party while mother is gone? But just imagine the trouble it

would save her! We ought to have a dance after all the invitations Tom and I have had. Besides, the fun!"

My grandmother straightened herself in her chair, and her eyes grew bright and keen. I knew the look: it meant that she was going to circumvent my mother. "I will give a party myself; I will give a handsome party, with everything of the best from Boston. Since I sold those building-lots, I can indulge myself a little, I rather think. You can write to your mother the day after, and tell her all about it. I know she has had a party on her mind all winter, and after your father's rheumatism set in, she was a good deal put about, with having your winter spoiled. She told me it was one of a great many reasons why she ought not to think of going away. You and I know your mother, Phœbe."

"It would take more than that to spoil my winter," I laughed gayly. "I have had a perfectly grand time, except for father's illness."

The party came off, and my grandmother as hostess was pretty to see. She had never more than half liked being an old lady, and I am prepared to say that on this one occasion she thoroughly enjoyed the absence of her daughter.

"Grandma, you and Phœbe are a team," was Tom's handsome compliment. He even praised our joint appearance: she in her black satin, I in Cousin Anne's Christmas gift, a soft little silk of palest apple-green. "Hullo, old Apple Blossom, the pink in your cheeks goes all right with it. Grandma, you sit up in your chair like Queen Victoria."

Our elders think that young people's parties are much alike: what with their ice-cream and roses, pretty gowns, music and dancing. Yet every girl knows that a word, a look, may make one party different altogether from any that went be-

fore or came after. That night when I wore the apple-green silk,—ah, well, I shall remember without writing it down.

My grandmother kept her room next day, repeating frequently, "I can't be thankful enough for what your mother was spared."

"Now, you dear lady," said I happily, "don't pretend you didn't enjoy yourself. Such showers of compliments! And flowers from Gilbert Thorne and the rest, — even Tom. It was like a coming-out party. You know you liked it better than a tea-party of old ladies, such as mother plans for you."

"Mind you take some of that cake to Mrs. Aspasia Weeks. I can't be expected to remember her other name."

As understudy for my mother I had the treasury of the Ladies' Aid to guard, a small black bag which I regularly hid from burglars. Still Waters had seldom had such a compliment as a burglary, for it was well

known for a town of very moderate means. Every self-respecting woman had "one good pin," and that was the extent of our jewels. Anything more would have exposed us to criticism, if not to thieves. Trust funds, however, were to be taken good care of; and one day I had hidden the treasure so securely that I could not find it myself. I had a panic of twenty-four hours, with many of the sensations of a defaulter, before I found the rusty little bag, with its thirty-seven dollars, at the back of the books in the secretary.

My mother was a Visitor at the Old Ladies' Home, but I had been an unofficial visitor since the advent of Mrs. Weeks-Thompson, and that duty sat lightly upon me. What weighed more upon my mind was my mother's custom of a weekly visit to our little settlement of Wagoners. Since her earliest married life she had gone there often. I think it began with the young wife's loyalty to her husband's work and

her interest in the scene of his daily life apart from home; but afterwards she became the friend of every family that worked there. My father, in his quiet way and in the kindness of his heart, knowing nothing of all the books to come, had, as well as Ruskin, sought for "the happy life of the workman." Before I had left home for college, I, too, had become acquainted with the Wagoners, old and young; but in four years of absence, I had, I suppose, lost my interest in them, or transferred it to other people.

My mother sent messages and inquiries from California, and I set forth to deliver them at the shops. It was a small plant, my brother Tom often complained, and the Callenders certainly did not grow rich from its profits; but it showed me on a reduced scale many of the problems of modern life, which of late years have reached the consciousness of growing humanity. Why should it be they, and not

I? crossed my thoughts, when the distant whistle from the wagon-shops sounded in the dark of the winter morning. The common lot made its first appeal to my mind and heart.

One day, Tom called me into the counting-room, and closed the door. "Phæbe, I want to consult you: you've got some sense. Now don't begin to laugh: this is business. Father's too far off. We've got a chance to do a big thing." Tom, with consideration for my feminine intellect, laid the "big thing" patiently and laboriously before me.

I asked questions; I deliberated. "Do you really want my opinion?" I said. "If you really do, then I say, wait till father comes home before you do a single thing."

"But this fellow wants an answer. I tell you there's money in it, Phœbe."

"He will be home in a fortnight," I answered.

"Women are timid. Mother has always

held father back: told him to be contented with a moderate income."

I had heard my father quote Timothy Dwight, "A man must ask his wife if he may be rich."

"I am mother's understudy, Tom. She would say, wait till father comes."

"We ought to be making more money," Tom scowled.

"We Callenders have a very good time, just as we are. You don't have to have so very much money for that, though you do have to have a little."

"That's what I say, and here's a chance to make it."

"I know mother would say, wait for father."

"I am left in charge of the business. Father trusts me."

"So am I, in charge of my mother's business. Wait."

"Oh, pshaw, Phœbe. You get an idea, and there's no budging you. There are

some folks you can't get an idea in or out of. I suppose I shall have to go ahead and do what is best for the good of the firm," said Tom grandly.

"Well, you know what I think. I shan't say any more. We won't quarrel, Tom, whatever we do."

"I suppose I shall have to wait, then," I heard him saying as I went out.

I said to myself that, as her understudy, I was without doubt carrying out my mother's wishes when I asked Judge Thorne and Gilbert to come in for Sunday night tea. I left Gilbert to Tom and my grandmother, and I had a long conversation with Judge Thorne. He looked me over in a kindly, thoughtful way, as if he were preparing a decision. How ardently I wished that it might be a favorable one, for I admired this old miles justitiæ, — this valiant soldier of justice. He did me the honor to talk on large masculine subjects, about which I had

very little to say in his presence, though I often discussed them with Florence Fay.

"I heard that old fellow holding forth," said Tom, when the evening ended;—
"pleased to get somebody to listen to him, wasn't he? I saw you drinking it all in!"

I resented this as well as I could.

"Bert liked it. I could see him looking at both of you. He will be a lonely old fellow when Bert goes off."

I said irrelevantly, "Oh, I shall be so glad when mother comes home. I want mother!"

XII

MY GRANDMOTHER'S BIRTHDAY

COON after the happy return of our Travelers, my sister Lilian was called in consultation. "I would not have a family party on grandma's birthday. It is too exciting at her age, - Roger would say." My medical brother-in-law was most useful in regulating the family conduct, though he made a point of never giving an opinion unless asked for it professionally. "I know Roger would n't approve," my sister continued. "I know exactly what he thinks about such things," which shows what a wife Lilian had become in the last dozen years. "I know he thought the Golden Wedding was too much for grandpa. No, I should invite some old friend to spend a quiet day with her, and not talk too much about birthdays.

Grandma has had quite enough excitement lately. She appeared to be having the time of her life at Phœbe's dance, but she has n't been out since. Then the rejoicings over your arrival home;—she has looked white and her voice is feeble. Well, I know very well what Roger would say."

"I have thought she seemed particularly well and happy this year, with so many young people about," said my mother; "more like her old self than any time since your grandfather died."

My grandmother, indeed, was a little vain of her health. She was given to congratulating herself that she had neither broken her hip nor lost her faculties, and "could go to church like other people." She was the optimist who can always see that things might have been worse. Yet after my grandfather's death, we could all see a change in her. This world which she had loved so heartily had begun to recede; she withdrew into herself, talked less, and

MY GRANDMOTHER'S BIRTHDAY 179 read more and more her Bible and her Whittier.

"She has never been the same since father died," my mother now continued. "No wonder! If I had lost my husband, after fifty years of happiness together, I think I should not have cared to live. But lately, since Phæbe came home, she has seemed like herself. How she entered into the children's dance! Dear mother had hardly ever seen dancing before, and she was carried away with it. She could talk of nothing but her party when I first got home."

"It was far too much excitement for her. Roger would tell you that you must be very careful of her. Take my advice and don't invite more than one person. Why not Mrs. Plummer from Oldhaven? She is a cheerful old party, as Tom says."

When this visitor was proposed to my grandmother, she assented cordially. "Yes, yes, she is younger than I am: she'll make nothing of the journey. You will have out the best dishes, Sophie. Betsey Plummer is used to have everything handsome about her. She has large means."

"You are not so badly off yourself, grandma, since you sold your land."

"I have enough money now for my dignity and my generosity," said my grandmother with pretty gratification. "I have no need to envy Betsey Plummer."

The birthday morning arrived, bright and sunny. "I am sure I have been blessed in my weather," my grandmother began the day.

I had gathered that Mrs. Plummer was a somewhat dreaded guest in our modest home. But my mother had said from our earliest days that visitors refreshed our minds and were good for the children's manners. I had prepared myself to behave very prettily to Mrs. Plummer, for I had heard that she was critical of the younger

generation. As it proved, she took no sort of notice of me, or of anybody but my grandmother. "A little ignoring is good for these college girls," I had heard my sister Lilian say. "They get analyzed too much. They think that they have a part to play, and that people are watching them."

Mrs. Plummer placed herself opposite my grandmother, and close to her, and the two old ladies bent toward each other for what they called an old-fashioned visit. They were so unaware of the rest of us that it seemed no rudeness to linger and listen.

My sister presented her fresh-starched children to Mrs. Plummer, who gave them a casual look. Lilian reported her to Roger as absent and forgetful and aging fast.

"I am rich in grandchildren," my grandmother remarked.

"I've nought in the wide world but a

bachelor nephew, who is no longer young and lives by himself."

A drearier family than the Plummers I thought I had never heard of.

"Well do I remember when my husband and I were delegates and entertained at your house, Mrs. Plummer." The two ladies had laid their friendship on a theological basis, and now fell to talking earnestly of the affairs of their denomination. From theology they passed to religion, and their eyes grew tender and their voices softer. They talked of the religious life with a freedom that to reticent youth was touching and wonderful. They seemed so near, I thought, while I, in the flower of my days, with life in every pulse, saw the heavenly vision far away.

"Since my husband went," my grandmother was saying, "I have felt the time would be short. I think of Whittier, what he said: 'All I ask is to be free from sin, and to meet the dear ones again.'" Each brushed away a tear, and then they fell to talking cheerfully of the past. One told the other how she first met her husband, and my grandmother's little toss of the head, and the light in her eyes were as pretty a bit of old romance as I have to remember. Mrs. Plummer told gravely how she and her late husband "had come to an understanding." The two old friends coursed over their long lives, while I, bending to my embroidery, sat silent and instructed. The superiority of "those days" to "these days" was most impressed upon me.

"We didn't in those days make Sunday a day for eating and sport," said Mrs. Plummer sternly.

"I was taught by my mother never to talk on Sunday of what I expected to do on Monday."

My grandmother, who was a reader, tried a little conversation about books.

"I don't have much time for books,"

said Mrs. Plummer briskly. "But I don't let the newspapers escape me. Books are too long—all of 'em."

"You can open a good book anywhere: that's a test," my grandmother maintained.

"I don't read their novels any more than I go to see their plays," Mrs. Plummer continued. "Either they try to make out a bad man is good, or else that a good man is bad. We used to know vice and virtue apart in my young days."

My grandmother defended the novel, for she was a lover of her kind; but the theatre was an object of suspicion to her generation of New Englanders.

"Mrs. Wise, did you see in this morning's paper the death of Mr. Christopher Sadler, formerly of Still Waters? I am only hoping he has left a good sum of money to the Association. He was prominent in our denomination in the West."

I dropped my embroidery.

"Who did you say it was this time? I

don't read papers much now, but it won't do to pass by the deaths. Old friends going every day. Mr. Sadler, did you say? I don't know about the Association; but I do know he had plans he was disappointed in," she said invitingly, and paused.

Mrs. Plummer at once begged to know what they were.

"H-m; he wanted to stop emigration from Massachusetts," she commented as she listened. "Why didn't he stay here himself, then?"

"His only relation was a young man growing up here. He wanted to make him a citizen of the town able to do for it."

"Would he have been valuable to the town without the money, I should first inquire," said Mrs. Plummer sharply. "I don't believe in giving young folks too much money."

"He refused to be bound by a promise to live here," I spoke out.

"Refused a fortune in these days,-

well, I'm glad to hear of it. And what did the old gentleman do next?"

"We don't know," my grandmother answered. "To think he's gone at last! We shall miss a good old friend. He has visited at this house often. He always made much of Phœbe."

Mrs. Plummer considered me thoughtfully, then turned to my grandmother. "She's rather your favorite granddaughter, is n't she?"

"No, no, I never should say that," my grandmother replied quickly. "It makes me think of my mother's kitchen maid, poor, foolish Huldy, when they asked her which she liked best, me or my sister Pamely. 'I should n't like to te-ell,' she drawled, 'for fear I sh'd make Pamely ma-ad.'"

"I see," said Mrs. Plummer, giving me another look.

I had much to think of, for the rest of that day. Luckily I had also much to do;

for I was the organizer of birthday celebrations in our family. While I set the table, arranged flowers, and tied up gifts, under all, my thoughts went whirling on: suspense on Gilbert Thorne's behalf, regret for the thwarting of an old man's desire, tenderness for the town that had inspired a romantic love, sheer sadness for a good friend gone, and pity for his lonely end. Absently I worked, tying flowers upon my grandmother's high-backed chair, and arranging little gifts around her plate. Then we led her out and enthroned her among the bright roses and carnations. She surveyed the table with its flowers and gifts and letters, and repeated fervently, -

"Praise to God, immortal praise,
For the love that crowns our days."

Mrs. Plummer watched her from across the table, and her strong old face took on a wistful, wondering look. "I've none of

this, I've none of 'this. My nephew, Ellery Tuckerman, is accustomed to forget my birthday."

The heap of letters was tied with a bright ribbon and placed beside my grand-mother's plate. "They'll be good reading for a week," she said. "I shall answer every one of 'em."

Mrs. Plummer suggested, with admirable sense, when the dinner was finished, "My dear friend, I don't know what you do, but I take a doze in my chair. And I know you ought to rest."

"Go and lie down, grandma," I pleaded.

"I prefer your grandfather's great chair. I like to sit in it and think of him. And then I drop off, and forget it is n't just as it always was. There's a chair for you, Betsey Plummer, in the same room, close by the fire."

"I take off my cap," said Mrs. Plummer.

"And so do I."

"Now, Tom," I had to whisper, "you

MY GRANDMOTHER'S BIRTHDAY 189 are going to behave yourself. Remember you are not a schoolboy." I drew him away from the door of the sitting-room, where the two old ladies were nodding in front of the fire.

Before the afternoon waned, Mrs. Plummer took her departure. The friends exchanged texts of Scripture, and blessed each other tenderly as they said good-bye.

"Every time I see her, I think it may be the last."

"Not a bit of it, mother," said my father heartily. "We don't encourage such talk."

We sat that evening round the great family table in the sitting-room, but my grandmother, drew a little away, into the shadow, "to spare her eyes." While we read our books and papers and frequently spoke out, she sat more silent than was her wont. My mother nodded to me across the table. "Tired," she whispered; "a little too much for her."

After a long silence grandma spoke

suddenly. "My mind dwells on old Christopher Sadler. A truly good man: he was ready to go. But I think of his lonely end as I sit here surrounded by my dear ones."

"It is sad, indeed," said my mother gently, "to leave no one to carry on your life."

"But there was all his money," I argued; "he could leave that so that it would carry on his life."

"Here is my daughter Sophie, and my granddaughter Phœbe: I would rather leave them to the world than any sum of money you could name me."

My mother took the dear hand tenderly in hers.

"It is near bedtime. I wish Tom would read a chapter. I wish to conclude my birthday with gratitude to my Maker."

It was part of the old bringing-up of grandchildren that they were practiced in reading aloud the Scriptures to their grandparents. Tom tried to ask airily, "What'll you have, grandma?" If left to himself, he would probably have chosen a chapter from Proverbs of a practical and humorous turn; but he waited respectfully, and was directed to a psalm of praise. He read with manly voice, but with gathering emotion, for Tom, deep in his heart, was the tenderest of us all. When he had ended, he turned away from the lamp, and retreated into the shadow.

"Grandma, play us one hymn, the way you used to," I begged.

"I must try, if it's only a verse or two, it being my birthday. You must sing, all of you."

But we preferred her own way of rendering a hymn. When my grandmother lost her youthful voice, she contrived a substitute for singing. She would play the accompaniment with feeling, and would speak the words with her whole heart. But to-night her touch on the keys

was tremulous, and her voice faltered as she repeated,—

"Now the day is over,
Night is drawing nigh;
Shadows of the evening
Steal across the sky.
Jesus, give the weary
Calm and sweet repose;
With thy tenderest blessing
May our eyelids close."

Tears were in my mother's eyes as she bade me good night. "I have the feeling that there may not be another birthday. 'Shadows of the evening steal across the sky.'"

XIII

VARIOUS EMOTIONS

TELL us who you've seen to-day, Mr. Callender," said my mother at the supper-table.

"I had a little conversation with young Thorne. He says that now Mr. Sadler is gone, he has no objection to saying that he has changed his mind about going West. He will enter a Boston office, and will live at home with his father. That was youth: would n't sacrifice his pride to make old Christopher die happy, and to benefit himself and all that belonged to him. He told me with head up and a stern eye. I said, 'Come, now, don't you think you were a little hard on that old man?' But I could n't make him see it."

"I rejoice for his father," said my

mother heartily. "It is a peculiar case of father and son."

"It is n't all his father," Tom put in.
"He's got more than one reason. I wish
I'd known he'd changed his mind. Not
a soul of us knew. We'd have told that
old gentleman."

I buttered a piece of bread, and took a long time to do it, without looking up at my family. I had known. There was often a little letter to be written to my friend in Iowa, thanking him for a marked newspaper, or a photograph of Western scenery. It would have been easy to slip in a bit of news of his cousins the Thornes.

"I shall tell Mr. Sadler," I had said at last to Gilbert, when I had withstood the temptation alone as long as I could.

"Phæbe, you won't do that," said Gilbert; I looked at him despairingly, but I said not another word.

"I believe I like the lad better, on the whole," my father now continued. "He

has his own way to make, but that won't hurt him."

"I'll bet on G. Thorne," said Tom.
"Have n't I always told you he'd be governor of Massachusetts some day, if he'd only stay round here?"

"I wish they could get a different house-keeper," my mother reflected. "There is nothing like the forlornness of two men—they are twice as forlorn as one. Though that is a large, comfortable house, there isn't a room in it that looks like home. There isn't a trace of a woman, unless it is a broom left standing in the hall, or a pail on the stairs. Our committee go there to consult Judge Thorne. We wish we were a committee to look after him."

"Gilbert will marry," said my father comfortably.

"It will be some years before he will be able to. A little of Mr. Sadler's money would have made everything so simple.

Meanwhile —" my mother shook her head anxiously and disclosed no more of her thoughts.

I took no part whatever in this conversation, but left the table as soon as I could, and went for a brisk walk. There are times when only walking will "still my beating mind." My walk ended, as it usually did, at Florence Fay's door, and I was soon confiding my troubled thoughts to her. "It is dreadful, that the minute anybody is dead, they begin to talk about his money; even the best and kindest people do. Poor Mr. Sadler! I knew him very well, and he was n't simply a millionaire; he was an idealist." This was a word we both loved.

"All real Americans are idealists," said Florence fervently. "They want to do something fine! Mr. Sadler's sentiment for this old town inspires me. It makes me feel as if I would always live here, and be somebody, and count for something! I never have," said Florence remorse-fully.

"You know very well," I answered, "this town couldn't get on without the Fays."

"Father, perhaps; but I have just appeared and disappeared."

"It is because you are shy, and don't let your light shine. I never knew anybody so ashamed of good deeds. Not much like me: I enjoy them so I have to dance and sing over mine."

"That is just temperament," said Florence; "temperament" was another word we loved. We stopped and considered it affectionately. Then Florence continued, "Phæbe, there is enough for me to do in the world without marriage. There is a new age beginning."

I was very doubtful, and bade her turn back to Tennyson's "Princess," which contained the creed of college girls in the '70's.

"I shall keep my ideals, and not risk

them," she answered. "I could n't bear an unhappy, disappointing marriage. I should want to die!"

"Some people marry and improve their ideals," I maintained.

"I am different from other women."

"No, you are not," my heart answered her, but I said no more.

Two days later I sought Florence again, this time in haste and distress. I found her at the shrine of the baby, and tore her away.

"Phœbe, Phœbe, tell me what is the matter," she cried; "I never saw you look like that!"

"Florence, something perfectly appalling has happened. A letter has come from Mr. Sadler's lawyer. Mr. Sadler left to me—me—me!—the money he was to have left to Gilbert Thorne. Oh, Florence, you little know what that means, the trouble that means!"

"An heiress, Phæbe, an heiress! But

how romantic!" Nobody could pronounce that word "romantic" quite as Florence could.

"But the wrong to Gilbert Thorne, that's not romance."

"It's the very thing!" cried Florence exultingly.

"You see Mr. Sadler adopted me for his good citizen of Still Waters, since Gilbert was determined to go away," I half sobbed. "He thought he could depend on me, thought I loved my home so much I could never leave it for anybody!"

Florence looked at me. "It was fortunate that old gentleman was shrewder in business matters than he was in some other things," she remarked. "He never would have made that fortune, if he had n't understood men better than he did young folks. But he was a dear old soul to leave my Phæbe Gay a pretty fortune, that he was. I don't care so much for the Thorne family."

"But they would naturally have been his heirs: there was no one nearer than his Cousin Mary's son. Oh, you have no idea what a situation it is!" As I cried, Florence stood over me, stroked my hair and whispered soothing words. "Which did more, dear, to make Mr. Sadler happy, you or Gilbert Thorne? I ask that."

"Gilbert was proud: he would n't have tried to win Mr. Sadler to like him, or even draw much attention to himself. Just because he knew his cousin was a rich old fellow, Tom said, it made him hold off. I am so miserable!"

"I have my opinion of Gilbert Thorne. Oh, you need n't throw back your head, Phœbe Gay: it is a pretty good opinion, on the whole. But these proud, reserved people do make such a mess of their affairs."

"Other people's, too," I assented.

"It is the same thing even in the home of the Thornes, — they are proud and re-

served with that old housekeeper,—they have no idea how to manage her. Let us hope it won't be like that with Gilbert Thorne in his business."

"Why, Florence, you are the practical one now," said I, almost smiling again.

"The only hope for that sort of man is to marry the right kind of woman, — one that is just the opposite of proud and shy."

"I think such a person would be horrid
— with no pride and no shyness about
her — horrid!"

"There is a golden mean," said Florence,—an invaluable maxim for closing a discussion. "But, Phæbe, I am so glad for you, dear!"

"You who have such ideas about money,
— you with your devotion to Emerson!"
I reproached her.

"But money is romantic,—only call it means, as the old New Englanders always did,—that takes all the vulgarity out of it. What shall you do first with your wealth?"

"Help me to think: how can I get some of that money back to the Thornes, where it belongs?"

"You can't do it," Florence considered.
"You never can do it except in one way."

"I shall talk with my father about it. Oh, you don't know — you don't know — "I faltered.

Florence examined me thoughtfully.

"How can they ever again feel the same towards me?" I said tearfully. "It changes everything."

"Nonsense, you are just the same people you always were. What is money?"

"Money is n't just a material thing in this case. It is a feeling, — it makes a wall of feeling!"

"Have you seen the Thornes?" asked Florence delicately, meaning, had I seen Gilbert.

"No. Probably my father will, and he

will talk it over with Judge Thorne. How can Gilbert ever want to speak to me again, — speak in the way he did. I know that awful pride of his. Oh, how can I bear it?"

Florence reflected. Her love for me was even greater than her love for a "situation." She sacrificed romance to saying in her most matter-of-fact voice, "I believe I have a better opinion of that young man's sense than you have. He is n't going to be melodramatic, and don't you be, Phæbe Gay." Could it be Florence Fay that spoke these homely words of comfort?

"You used to have sense, Phæbe, till you—fell in love—yes, I'll say it right out at last. I have been sure of it ever since the night of your grandmother's party. You never really fell in love with Mr. Paul and you behaved in a perfectly sensible way about him. I remember distinctly your excellent advice in such matters: 'Look up and not down,' and so

forth. Admirable! Try it again, Phœbe dear. And Phœbe, don't, don't do or say anything insincere, just out of mere womanishness. We have never such need of truth, when our whole life and happiness and heart and soul depend on it."

"The instinct to flee!" I tossed back my head. "But you are mistaken, Florence. Gilbert Thorne has never spoken a word to me."

She smiled indulgently. "I agree with you that Mr. Sadler's will has made the situation a little difficult: it has made a situation. But remember it's two people's happiness."

"You have grown very wise," I answered her; "you are no older than I am."

"I have had more to bear. You have had such a light-hearted life, Phœbe Gay. I suppose you always will live that way, because you have that precious quality that I have n't, — buoyancy."

"I generally come up; I generally 'float'; but not to-day. I am utterly miserable, and I ought to be."

Florence looked at me in a maternal, care-taking way she had. "Dear, let us go into Boston this afternoon. It is time for spring shopping."

I rose to this diversion instantly; and yet the news of the morning never left my thoughts. It subtly entered into every purchase, for, though I had no more immediate money to spend, I was aware that things in shops would never look to me quite the same again. I found out afterwards that my parents had felt considerable anxiety as to the effect of sudden riches upon their daughter's character. I think they had reason, when I remember how my affliction for myself and Gilbert Thorne faded before the intoxication of my new power. "Why Florence, I can have whatever I want! I am not my old self: I am somebody else!"

"Do you believe you can have what you want, just with money?" said Florence pityingly. Sentiment possessed her once more, and cast me, too, back into my despondency. After I had done a few errands for my mother, and Florence had bought the latest thing in rattles for her baby brother, I proposed wearily that we go home. There was a strange, new dearness about the thought of home, for there, at least, nothing would have changed since morning. I wanted to get back to my old stable world, away from pictures and laces and jewels, — remote, unfamiliar objects that I might have now and welcome.

"I shall not spend that money for myself altogether," my reflections led me to say. "He did not mean I should: it was to be in trust for Still Waters."

"Yet he liked you and your family; really loved you all, and wanted to make you happy. You ought to respect that wish, too."

This was on the train, speeding out to Still Waters. At the Cambridge station, it somehow did not surprise me that Gilbert Thorne walked into our car: it was the way things had happened that day. He and his Law School friend raised their hats, took seats ahead of us and continued what appeared to be an absorbing conversation. Florence gave me a glance of fathomless meaning, and I looked help-lessly at her.

"We are not of much importance compared with the affairs of the nation that they are settling," said Florence. "Boys amuse me. Gilbert Thorne, for instance, when he tries to talk exactly like his father, the Judge. He would have taken the seat in front of you if I hadn't been here. That is the effect I always have: that is the kind of girl I am," said she ruefully.

As we approached Still Waters, she said, "Michael will be here with the car-

riage. Let me set you down at your house. If I don't, you will have to walk that half-mile with Gilbert Thorne."

"I will!"

"Walk home with him? Phæbe dear, you are tired out with emotions. Better let Michael leave you at home. Besides, the friend is with him."

"He lives on the other side of the town. Gilbert does not know yet: he cannot possibly have heard. I may never have another free, natural word with him. He may go West, after all, just to get away from this hateful situation. I know him better than you do. You say I should be truthful, Florence. This is truthful, to wish to see him now. It frightens me; it is taking my life in my hands. But oh, if there could be a word or two, that he would never, could never take back! Oh, do you think it is unwomanly? — but Florence, I was n't quite truthful to you, — he has said it in everything but words."

"I believe I don't think so much of money as you do," said my friend, in a quiet voice, to calm me.

"Since we were little children, since we went to dancing-school, we have been friends," I kept on, justifying myself.

"Yes; it was such a matter of course that I have enjoyed something happening like this."

"But now you see the misery of it!"

"No, I don't. He is too manly a fellow, he is too much a gentleman, to care one way or the other for a mere matter of money. Do have a little sense, Phæbe. Don't you be high-flown, and spoil your happiness. However, I don't approve of your meeting now. You have had too many kinds of emotion to-day."

"But to-morrow he will know," I pleaded.

"Then, Phœbe, follow your heart, dear."

XIV

A NEW CAREER

PHŒBE eats no supper, — no wonder, after such a piece of news as we have had to-day," said my mother compassionately.

I looked at her helplessly, with tears rushing to my eyes.

"Cheer up, Phœbe, we'll help you spend it," Tom consoled me.

As soon as I could find my mother alone, I whispered, "Mother, mother, Gilbert—oh, you know, mother—he has just said it to me, and he doesn't know yet about the will. What shall I do? Who will tell him? Oh, it can't make any difference now, can it, when he has said—what he said?" I buried my face against her, and cried at last.

"Dear, dear child, you have had too

much for one day. Come up to my room, dear. It makes me very happy—that it should be my friend Mary's son, now to be my son, too. I have long thought of it, my precious child. I have felt it could be no other way, my two dear children. Your mother never loved you so!" And safe in her room, she took me in her arms and held me to her as if I were still her little child.

"Father thinks the world of Gilbert, and he is Tom's best friend, so everything is right, mother, except this money, the very money that ought to have been Gilbert's."

"Phæbe, in this blessed moment you know how much greater love is, how little the rest counts. Trust love." My mother's dear face shone. "Let us tell your father now," she said.

"And Tom," said I; "but Lilian not quite yet."

She put her arm around me and led me

downstairs. "Mother," I whispered on the way, "what do you think I have discovered? Our Tom, who never writes a letter if he can help it, has been corresponding with Sallie Livermore ever since she made that visit here. Now open your eyes!"

My mother led me quite formally into the sitting-room, where my father was lighting the evening lamp for himself and looking neglected by his womenfolk. Tom was preparing to go out for the evening.

"Our Phœbe has promised Gilbert Thorne to be his wife," my mother said with trembling voice.

My father turned round upon us, frowning. "What's this you tell me? We have to give up our Phæbe, just as we've got her home, is that what you mean? It's hard for me to think kindly of even Gilbert Thorne if that is what he asks. Tell him we can't spare her yet, — we won't spare her. He'll have to wait. He will have to

prove first what he can do in the world." My father kissed me tenderly, and then turned away, too agitated to say more.

Tom stood in the doorway speechless. He stared at me till I begged, "Tom, speak! Say something to me!"

"I was just going over there," he said, laying down his hat. "I was going to tell Bert the news."

"Go and tell him, Tom; but tell him first that you know what we've just told you. Go!"

"We will say nothing to grandma tonight: it would be too much for her."

That wonderful night, half waking, half sleeping, and all a dream, was followed by an ordinary breakfast, at which not much was said of the day before. Tom, to my relief, but a little to my alarm also, said nothing about his evening call.

"Bert had to take an early train to Cambridge, but he is coming up again to-night.

I told him to look in this evening."

"Oh, you did, sir!"

I should have found that day hard to live through if I had not taken from the post-office a letter written as soon as Gilbert Thorne reached home the night before; and if I had not paid a visit to Florence Fay.

"How about that career?" asked my father, who had in a measure recovered his cheerfulness when he was assured that Still Waters and not Seattle would be our home. I answered gayly; but, nevertheless, the happiness of that day was shot through with apprehension. I had grown up with Gilbert Thorne and I knew his disposition. I had heard it called "difficult," and though I resented the word, I had understood it. Never yet had his disposition made difficulties for me, because Gilbert Thorne understood me as well as I did him. If only I could make him see my true heart now, I believed I could bring all right.

Tom made an unfortunate suggestion as I reflected upon the situation. "People are going to say Gilbert Thorne was a lucky chap, not to lose that money, after all. That'll gall him."

"As a matter of fact, my son, nobody but the Thornes and the Callenders knew that little story. If my children have been discreet, there needs to be no gossip."

I felt a trifle guilty, but I knew that Florence Fay was a very well for secrets.

My mother gave her opinion. "I don't mind saying that it makes me very happy that Phœbe will divide with Gilbert. I believe Mr. Sadler understood things better than we gave him credit for, and that he meant his fortune to be shared in just this way."

"Stubborn old fellow, he had his pride, too, about keeping to his promise. All's well that ends well," and my father smiled frankly and happily, to see a loved daughter so well "provided for."

Still I waited longingly and apprehensively for Gilbert's coming. I rehearsed the long argument which I had made ready, pacing the floor of the sitting-room, and listening for a step on the walk. The family had each a pressing duty elsewhere. Grandma had not left her room that day, and my mother would sit with her awhile. My father looked at his watch, and said he ought to see about that business of the Home, assuring my mother, according to custom, that he should be gone "not above an hour." My brother Tom lingered last of the family. He looked at me in an odd way for a young gentleman who professed not to believe in romance. He was distant and respectful, and even said, as he contrived to take his departure, "If somebody had to carry you off, Phæbe Gay, I'm glad it was old Bert and nobody else." Then my brother Tom actually kissed me, - which he would not ordinarily do for a journey of less than a thousand miles.

Some member of the family, in country fashion, answered the bell in the evenings. I opened the door for Gilbert Thorne, but did not quite look at him, as I ushered him in. He shook hands with me, and I was both frightened and amused. I threw back my head and looked him in the eyes, and suddenly I felt myself years older than he, and mistress of the situation. I was cast for a part in comedy, not tragedy.

"Gilbert, you look much too solemn for my—lover!" I had never spoken the beautiful word before, and he had never heard it. His eyes shone upon me; then they darkened.

"I am in trouble, Phœbe."

"I am the one to tell your troubles to, now and forever, Gilbert. But the joys, too!"

"There are both now; and you know what they are."

"If the trouble is what I think it is, I

don't sympathize much with it: it is too trifling compared with the joy."

He expounded just wherein the trouble lay. I forgot the counter-argument I had prepared, and answered with a laugh.

Gilbert gave me the little indulgent, amused smile that he had bestowed on me and my behavior since the days of dancing-school, — the smile which I privately thought the sweetest of all applause. I laughed again unfeelingly.

Still he continued the exposition of his peculiar relation to Mr. Sadler and to me. I shook my head, and again he smiled at me as if I were a child. The better to convince me with his argument, he drew nearer to me.

"What is it you are trying to prove to me?" I said; "that you and I do not love each other? That is the one thing: all the rest is nothing." We could not do that dear old man such injustice as to let him spoil our happiness. Forget his money!" We did forget it in that blissful hour.

Then the family came pouring in, it seemed, from all the doorways. My grandmother was able to come downstairs, and gave me her tenderest blessing. What they said to Gilbert and what they made of him was my great joy. I knew his upright soul, his loyal heart; I knew my young "soldier of justice."

"Bring your father," I whispered.

Judge Thorne stood before me, benignant, smiling, but deeply moved. He made me a little speech, of which I remember these few words: "The ideal of the home which you and Gilbert set up for yourselves, the way you look at life together, and see your duty, will be your best service to this community. The fate of our country depends finally on its homes."

My grandmother listened to Judge Thorne with a wistful look on her brave old face. "Days that we shan't live to see. My work is done: I pass it on to this dear child. Phæbe must be a better woman than her grandmother."

"Never! I would n't be if I could!"

There was Gilbert's little smile again, as if he were the one who best understood my speech. Gilbert always knew what I meant: was it a wonder I loved him?

Tom saw us exchange a happy glance, and put in a word. "Don't you let her do all the talking, Bert. She likes an audience."

Ah, the truth one hears from brothers! I suppose it is one of their best uses.

"If there is anything I do detest," I said quickly, "it is a woman who does n't give a man a chance to —"

"There you are, answering for Bert already. You look out!"

How did it happen that Lilian and Roger dropped in, though this was before the day of the telephone? "There was something in the air," said Lilian, "something that made me feel I must bring Roger down. Of course we wanted to talk over that extraordinary will. It is n't a secret, is it?" she said, looking across the room at Gilbert and his father. "Phæbe an heiress! Let me kiss you, dear child!"

"Now kiss me again," I said in her ear. "There is something better still."

My sister's face was a study, as her eyes followed mine. "I understand," she said slowly. "I expected it; but I should think he might have chosen a better time."

"Lilian," said I, with firmness, "it was all settled before there was a word of this — that is what makes me so doubly happy."

"Well, if you are happy, Phœbe dear, — that is the point. I suppose you are, dear child." She gave me a second kiss very tenderly. "Roger, our Phœbe announces her engagement. Congratulate her."

[&]quot;To -"

"Yes, of course. Have n't I always told you?"

Roger Waite did congratulate me, in words I loved him for. "I know your young man well," he said. "I have been there when his father was ill. You are safe, Phœbe."

I whispered, "Roger, make Lilian like him!"

"Lilian has been ambitious for you—thought you ought to marry among Cousin Anne's city folks."

"But you know, Roger. You know Gilbert," I pleaded.

"He is n't a showy chap. You will draw him out: you are just the one for him. I'll go tell him so."

I never saw Gilbert Thorne look so proud and handsome as he did while Roger talked to him. "They will be two good brothers," said I, commending myself.

Lilian was full of loving talk. "Little

sister, you will soon have to be thinking of clothes. There will be no need of pinching. Why don't you and Gilbert build?—say a lovely country house on one of the hills?" Lilian was of a constructive mind, and, before I could fairly answer, had settled the style of architecture.

"But Judge Thorne does n't wish to leave his old home, and wants us there with him."

"That is a good old house, and can be thoroughly done over." Lilian's imagination was off again, and had selected wall-papers in a twinkling. "I will help you gladly. You can have your new house with the view a few years later."

"I should love to make Judge Thorne comfortable and happy," I said joyously.

"That housekeeper will get her deserts at last. I should like the job of dismissing her! I suppose you will be married in church. This ought to be rather a grand wedding, all things considered."

"Oh, Lilian, you take my breath away. It is only an hour since —" I turned my face away.

"You dear child, don't you suppose I understand? Don't I remember? And if it had n't been for you, Roger and I might never have made up! Of course I am glad you are so happy. Your Gilbert Thorne is handsome, I'll say that for him. Make him come and sit by me, and then you go off and leave us."

My father could not let go of his topic, my career. "Well, my daughter," he smiled upon me. "Do you recall that conversation when you first came home from college?"

Ah, how happily I remembered now, in my sweet certainty of the best career for woman of the old order or the new!



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